

# SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY  
C. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 412.

FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 21ST, 1896.

[ONE PENNY.]

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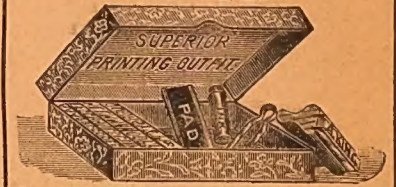
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# SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY  
C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 412.]

For the Week ending November 21st, 1896.

[1d.]

## Through a Glass Darkly.

THE size of the cottage was perfectly ridiculous. The occupants of more pretentious cottages round about spoke of it as the "Doll's House;" the villagers knew it as the "Gladstone Bag," and their humourist had hoped he would be able to master the almost irresistible propensity which seized him on Saturday nights after sojourning in The Ship Hotel, which was, to put a satchel strap round the house and carry it home to his wife.

But cottagers and villagers alike were really consumed with a curiosity concerning the man who was immured in this little, sombre shell of a house, stuck so bleak on an isolated dune. The visitors who came to Selsey during the summer months only occasionally saw him towards nightfall striding away from them down the deserted beach. They saw that he was tall and bearded, and of strong build; and that was all. The villagers saw even less, and knew no more of him, though they had tried hard enough to pump his one servant, the affable "Mooseer" Donc, who went daily on "Meester" Trappe's errands. He was seen occasionally, however, by the life-saving men at the station, and mostly on stormy winter nights.

On one such wintry night, the inhabitant of the "Bag," or the "Doll's House," was, for a wonder to the admirable Donc, not abroad. He sat in a room which was also the hall, before a pine table, the light of a hanging oil lamp above it mingling with the hot blaze of a fire in a wide-mouthed chimney. The little house shivered and shook in the grip of the seaward gale. Trappe's face, though tanned by much exposure, looked sickly in the double glare. On the table was a bottle of brandy and a glass, an ink-stand and a pad of paper. He was writing this:

### A LITTLE STORY OF A LITTLE SOUL.

BY LOUIS TRAPPE.

God save us from all cant and hypocrisy; the pretension of love for "antiques," for "symbolism," for daubs in "yellow" or "green," for abortions in black and white; for all the nastiness of degeneration. Make us honestly grateful for the high privilege of seeing the dawn of spring and smelling the sweet breath of the awakened grass and feeling the jubilant

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sting of the salt spray. Lead us to know that the life of the drawing-room is the death of the best spirit in us; and that to cling to the skirts of society is to be dragged in the dust. Save us from contact with the woman whose touch is leprous, because her heart is flint.

This is such a little story because it must be made to square with the central fact in it, the soul of a woman, and central circumstance in it, the breaking of a man's heart, which, as everybody knows, is the merest fragile trifle. This man and woman met on board ship, and by the time they came to Havre he was very hard hit. So he followed on to Paris, and one Sunday, when the fountains were gushing at Versailles, he walked into the woods with her, and on the edge of the Bosquet d'Amou he made a fool of himself. But he was quite in earnest, mind you. She saw he was. She let him kiss her. She even trembled all over. And he has wondered since whether it was all suppressed laughter or whether he had really stirred up her feelings for the moment—he was so much in earnest.

Well, he stood an accepted lover; a joyous, unquestioning one; a blind, idolatrous fool. Now, at last, he had laid hold of life; the secret of its highest gift was his! His trust was so great that he could read into her eyes a full response to his own splendid joy. Her past was nothing to him—then. He told her to lock it up and put it away (as though she would really have surrendered the key, as she had offered to do.)

His childish confidence was pleasing to her; and certainly it was complete. When she put aside all talk of immediate marriage, and said: "Oh, no, not that. You must not, *must* not mention that to me again. Not till I tell you." He took her at her word, and she kissed his hand and said: "You are very, very good to me. How can I ever repay you?"

As though she did not know the only way to do it! As though she had ever had it in her mind to do it!

He stayed her dupe for three months—the most delightfully willing dupe in all the world. It's a preposterous thing to say, but the ecstasy of those months stands out in such radiant contrast against the dull background of a hard, loveless life, that, despite their cost, he would even wish to live them over again. He paid out his heart for three months' residence in Eden; not such an expensive rental after all.

The end of the lease came one day in September. She had coaxed tears into her eyes the day before. She had taken him by the hands and said: "Maybe—maybe—mind I don't promise for sure—*maybe* I'll have news for you soon. Don't come to me again until I send for you. Now, not another word, dear. Good-night." And he had obediently left her, wondering what was in store for him, and hoping the best.

So he bided his time as patiently as a patient man could, which meant that for three days he never strayed beyond the portals of his hotel, lest he should delay by a second the receipt of the expected summons. By noon of the fourth day he could stand it no longer. The suspense had kept him walking his rooms all night. His imagination warned him; his heart beat so, it hurt him. He rushed to her lodgings. The maid held open the door and he felt so silly and confused upon seeing her so coolly smiling at him that he could not stammer a question. "Will you come in?" she said. "Madame has gone out with Monsieur."

"Monsieur!"

He stared at his feet. "Monsieur? When did Monsieur come?" he asked in another man's voice.

"Oh, pardon. Yes, on Monday."

Monday. That was three days ago.

He leant against the centre table, and the maid went out of the room.

How long he stood there he will never know, nor can he recall the jumble of his thoughts, until his half-closed eyes opened upon an envelope, directed to her in a dashing manly hand.

No thought of the meanness of the act came to him then, and he is not sensible of it to this day. He opened the letter deliberately and read:

London, September —, '93.

MY DARLING LITTLE GIRL,—Here I am in London. I've just got word that all is well. I'll join you in Paris, I hope, by Monday, and then we can lay out plans for a good long picnic. Shall it be Italy or Spain? Algiers or Cairo? Who is this amiable I—you mention? (Here he read his own name mentioned, with emotions not to be named). *Prenez garde*, my little girl. Beware of Charybdis. However, he's an unknown quantity to me, and I leave him in your hands, only stipulating that, now we're out of the woods, you mustn't do anything to get us back there again.—*A toi toutjours*,

BOB.

It's only a little story this, and it is told simply because of its littleness. Here is a woman with a little soul, but big with power of causing pain, who goes out of her way to break a heart that was fairly big and fresh and certainly true. Why did she do this wanton thing? Because, being a woman, she could not help it? Can it be possible that the sleep of this woman has been made all the sweeter for her little act of vandalism?

God save us all from contact with the woman whose touch is leprous, because her heart is flint.

Selsey, May 7th, '95.

Having written this inartistic tale, Trappe wisely refrained from reading it and took some brandy instead. Then casting his eye over some magazines on the table he noted one, and putting the manuscript in an envelope, addressed it and summoned Donc. "Please post this to-morrow, will you?" he said.

Late one spring day the village humourist, who was also the village postman, handed "Mooseer" Donc a letter and a periodical, the wrapper of which bore certain suspicious signs, to which the casual remark of the humourist that he "didn't know Trappe was a writin' man," may or may not have reference. When Donc delivered them, his master glanced at the periodical and threw it unread into the fire. Then he opened the letter and took out of it a little bit of a cheque, such as befitted such a little bit of a story; and he held it awhile in his hands and laughed at it, and said, "Donc, this is blood money and I can't accept it. But *you* may with a perfectly free conscience." Whereupon he signed it, and Monsieur Donc, after handling it gingerly, with one eye upon his master, shook his head, and pocketed it.

Then the days ran on and the weather at Selsey steadily improved, bringing the annual contingent of visitors. This was the most trying period of the year to Trappe. Shut up in his "Gladstone Bag" he had no companionship until nightfall but his bottle and Donc, and in proportion as he uncorked the one he was sure to uncork the other, which sorely smote his self-respect.

Thus matters stood on a fine bluish-grey morning early in September. Trappe stood at the eastern window of his "Bag" looking out to sea. He was tired of it all; he wondered whether the two years had really made a new man of him, or whether the effect of the

last bottle had brought him for a moment to a sense of his enormous waste of time. The sun fell on the tumbling surf; the gulls lazily soared and suddenly dipped; the soft air, moist with the mystery of the sea, stirred his greyish hair and left a salt kiss on his lips. He turned about, restless and feverish. It was that last bottle. On his cheap dressing table lay his powerful marine glass, aluminium finish. His hand closed upon it involuntarily, as he eyed himself in the mirror. The face was all right. Evidently broken-hearted men didn't die of heart-disease after all; they could even tan like less romantic folk. Perhaps they might even die of delirium-tremens like the most vulgar of gutter people, which reminded him that his linen was none of the cleanest, or his beard well-trimmed, or—The effigy before him was not that of the gentleman he had seen in Paris. He wondered whether Donc had remarked it.

He swept the sea with his glass. A steamer with no signs of life on it but its belching funnel; and a small fishing boat. He brought the glass round until it rested on the life-saving station. His friends there were cooking their breakfast. Then the cottage between filled the glass, and he rested his vision there in idle curiosity. Green and yellow paint, roomy and ugly verandahs; starved and scorched grass. On the front porch a nurse and several children. Who were these people? He must ask Donc. Then—

Aluminium is as strong as steel, else Trappe's sudden grip on his glass would have bent it. From a window on the second floor of the cottage facing the "Gladstone Bag," a woman was gazing at him through a pair of opera glasses. Trappe was not the sort of man to stand there and flit with an unknown woman *à la lorgnette*. Why, then, didn't he retire into his "Bag," and pull down the lid, or rather the blind? Above all, why did he suddenly go all-a-tremble, and grab the window-frame and drop his expensive glasses and sob like a little child:

"Oh, my dear! my dear!"

\* \* \* \*

"Donc," said Trappe, "come here."

This was an hour later.

"Donc, who lives over there?"

"There, Monsieur? Why—" and Donc went through the most absurd pretension at wool-gathering, crying, of a sudden: "Oh, yes, Monsieur, Monsieur Wilson."

"What!"

It wasn't Trappe's tone or manner which startled the estimable Donc, it was his unwonted vehemence. Trappe looked like a maniac. Then he said, quietly enough: "How long have you known this, Donc?"

"Eh, Monsieur? The Monsieur Wilson? I have not ze pleasure."

"No, no. How long have you known that he has been here?"

"Why, Monsieur, he has been here all summer. He and madame."

Trappe gasped. "And the children?"

"Out, Monsieur."

Trappe's head fell forward into his hands. Then the merciful Donc said gently:

"I could not speak to Monsieur, until Monsieur spoke to me. Is it not so? *Eh, bien*. When Fidele—Monsieur remembers Fidele?—who had the honour of attending Miss Wilson, when I had the honour of attending Monsieur—"

Trappe's hand went into his hair as though to pluck his wits together.

"When Fidele wrote me that she was to come with her mistress to visit here at the pavilion of Miss Wilson's brother—"

Trappe stood up on his only two legs.

"Could I tell Monsieur that she was here? Did I not ask Fidele, and did—"

"Donc!" said Trappe in the voice of a child of four afflicted with weak lungs. "You said Miss Wilson, did you not, Donc?" as he sank into his chair.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Donc, I'm very tired. 'Pon my word you'll have to help me up—up—Oh, I say, Donc. Just you run over to the what-you-may-call-em's and say that Mr. Trappe—you'll remember the name, won't you?—that Mr. Louis Trappe is down with heart-disease and that somebody—Donc, remember!—somebody's got to look after him."

Then Trappe went to pieces.

\* \* \* \*

The delight of coming out of dense blackness into the splendour of warm sunlight. That is one and a delicious thing. But to do that and at the same time come unexpectedly from the depths of despair out into the clear light of hope; to revive after many days of apathetic suffering, one's sense of the joy of living—that is a rarer and finer thing—giving adequate compensation, indeed, for much torture.

When Trappe first opened his eyes after some days of lunacy, and knew what he was about, he turned to the very polite and patient Donc, and said: "Where on earth am I?"

"At Monsieur Wilson's," said Donc.

"Oh," said Trappe, closing his eyes. Then Donc glided from the room.

Presently Trappe raised his lids again. And he had cause to. On his lips were lips he had never known; but he was gazing into eyes he knew so well. The lips did not move from his, but they murmured something like this: "Sh-h-h-h, my dear. The doctor won't have it—Ah, Louis, Louis! will you men never know? Why couldn't you trust me? You did until that day. Fidele told me you had been there; I saw you had opened the letter (was it nice of you, Louis?); but even then my brother (he was my brother, my dear) would have gone to you and told you all about it—all about my divorce, a shameful story. Yet you did not wait. Oh, you men! Can you fancy how I felt? Can you understand, my dear, dear Louis, what my brother—look at me—meant? But there, there! It's over now."

Trappe looked up at her with eyes that would have warmed the North Pole.

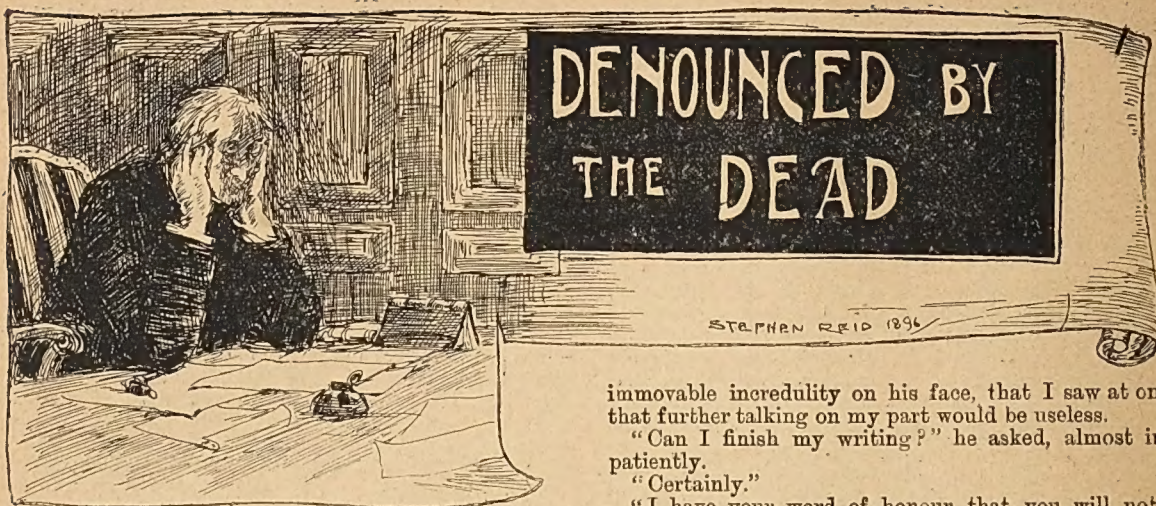
"Ah, no," she whispered. "You mustn't. Do you think I don't know that you have suffered, too?"

His rapturous look made her blush.

"You're so helpless, Louis, I feel like a coward when I say provoking things to you. But I must. You silly, silly little grey-haired boy. 'A Story of a Little Soul.' Signed Louis Trappe. Dated Selsey. Oh, Louis!"

He lifted himself right out of the sheets and, quivering like a willow bough in a light breeze, held out his arms (they were too weak to clasp her), and said: "If you only knew, my dear, if you only knew!"

As she laid him back upon the pillow, his head upon her breast like that of a little child, she whispered: "Oh, but I do, my dear. Indeed I do."



"SCOUNDREL! You have come to kill me!"

My cousin, Sir Richard Terral, started up from his sleep, and stared as if fascinated at the revolver in my hand.

On stealing up to his study I had found him asleep, his arms stretched forward on the desk at which he sat, and his head on his arms. Drowsiness had overcome him apparently in the midst of his writing, for a quill-pen remained between his fingers, and the writing-table was strewn with manuscript.

"One of the old man's interminable essays for the COUNTY GENTLEMAN'S REVIEW," I said to myself. "Enough to send anybody to sleep."

But what attracted my attention most as I quietly entered the room was a six-barrelled revolver lying close to my cousin's arm. The position was a most dangerous one if the weapon were loaded. I took it up gingerly to examine it, and in the moment of my doing so, the old man awakened, and stared at me with terrified eyes.

It was only for a moment, however, while he uttered his exclamation. The next, as I laid the revolver on the mantel-shelf, behind me, the Baronet had resumed his ordinary air of cold, emotionless calm.

"Your visit does not surprise me," he said, in his usual dry tones. "It does not surprise me at all. I expected it, and am aware of your object in stealing into my room in this clandestine manner."

I simply bowed in reply. There was no denying the way in which I had reached my cousin's presence. He continued speaking:

"Perhaps you will grant one favour before proceeding to carry out your purpose, and murder me. There is no need for haste, as you are doubtless aware. Perhaps you will allow me to finish some writing which is of the greatest importance to me. It will not take me many moments."

"But, my dear Sir Richard," I began, unable to refrain from smiling.

My cousin interrupted me.

"You may save yourself the trouble of attempting any disguise," he said quietly. "We understand one another perfectly."

"Excuse me," I said. But the Baronet interrupted me once more, with an expression of such perfect and

immovable incredulity on his face, that I saw at once that further talking on my part would be useless.

"Can I finish my writing?" he asked, almost impatiently.

"Certainly."

"I have your word of honour that you will not—disturb me?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you."

Sir Richard consulted his watch, then turned to his desk, and dipped his pen in the ink.

"I rely on your honour," he said.

And as I nodded to humour him, the room became silent, except for the busy scratching of his pen.

In four or five minutes this sound ceased, and the old man looked up.

"I should like to go into the library one moment—alone. You will remember that there is no bell there, nor any means of my calling assistance, even if we were not alone in the house."

"I am entirely your servant, Sir Richard. It is quite unnecessary for you to consult me."

"You are very kind," returned the Baronet, with ironical politeness, and he disappeared into the little book-lined room which opened from the study where I was standing.

"Now," he said, as he returned, drawing a long breath, "let us understand one another, John Terral."

He sat down again in his chair, and faced me as I stood leaning against the mantel-shelf.

"Let us state the case quite plainly," he said, drawing it up into invisible heads with his pen on the table as he spoke. "It is quite natural that you should want to kill me, provided you can do so without detection. You would inherit the estate at once, and be left free to win Mary's heart, as you shall never win it while I live. I do not deny the advantages of the step you contemplate, nor the arguments in favour of your success. As you are aware, my daughter and the servants will all be absent for some hours. I am an old, weak man—you are young and strong. You have obtained possession of the revolver—my only hope of defending myself. So much for your side of the question. Now listen for a moment to mine."

"Pardon me, Sir Richard," I interrupted; "but it is quite unnecessary. I assure you that I have not contemplated for a single moment the crime of which you seem to think me capable. That I came here clandestinely I will admit, but only because you have given your servants orders to prevent my entrance—by force, if required. My one object in forcing my presence upon you

My cousin waved his hand, and smiled with chilling incredulity.

"Kindly allow me to state the case completely," he said. "If you are good enough to do so without interruption, we shall understand one another better, and I shall then be happy to listen to anything you have to say. May I proceed with the arguments against your killing me?"

I remained silent, the only course when a man is so obstinate, and the old man went on in his quiet judicial way.

"I said arguments: but there is only one; it consists of a small sheet of fine India paper, on which I have just written the following words:

"The study, Terral Court, seven minutes to three p.m., Friday. My cousin, John Terral, has just entered the room by stealth, and is about to kill me."

"I have added a few words to my daughter, solemnly exhorting her, in case I am found murdered, to see that my death is avenged. In the little while you have been acquainted with her, you will have seen sufficient of my daughter's character, I trust, to be assured that this exhortation from her father will not be neglected. Allow me to proceed, however. You will admit that if that paper is found after your crime, as sooner or later it must be, that it will be a damning piece of evidence against you—sufficient, indeed, to bring you to the gallows. I have hidden it carefully between the pages of a certain book in the library."

"Yes, Sir Richard, the piece of paper is a conclusive



*"Let us state the case quite plainly."*

argument against murder: I could not dream of killing you now," I said, with a laugh.

I was impatient to say what I had come to say, before

I was interrupted. The Baronet insisted on finishing, however. He was evidently proud of his elaborate precautions against me.

"One moment," he said, "and I shall have finished, and will place myself at your disposal. It may occur to you that after killing me you can destroy the denunciation which sooner or later will bring the crime home to you. Allow me to state the arguments against your being able to do so. I have hidden the paper in a book, as I said. I have taken great care that nothing should give you a clue as to which book I have used. There are, roughly speaking, seven hundred in the library. The probabilities are that you would have to examine a quarter of those before selecting the one I have chosen for my purpose. As the denunciation is written on this paper, and carefully placed between the leaves, you would be obliged to spend a considerable time over each book, if you intended to find the manuscript. Let us say that each book takes only five minutes. Then your search will take you, if you are moderately lucky, twenty-seven hours."

The old man paused to work out the calculation on the blotting-pad on his desk.

"Allow me to proceed. Although you can gain no clue to the book I have selected, still, there are reasons why it will be opened by my daughter within a few hours. I think she would open it even if I were killed, because she must consult the book in order to finish for me work of the utmost importance. Of course, there is a chance that she might not do so, and that you might possess yourself of the document before it is seen by any other eye; but you will admit, I think, that the balance of probability tends the other way. I believe I have stated the case clearly and impartially. How it will affect your decision depends, of course, upon yourself."

He paused for a moment, throwing himself back in his chair with the satisfied air of a man who has conscientiously performed a somewhat difficult task. Then, before I had time to think out the best way of answering him, the old man continued:

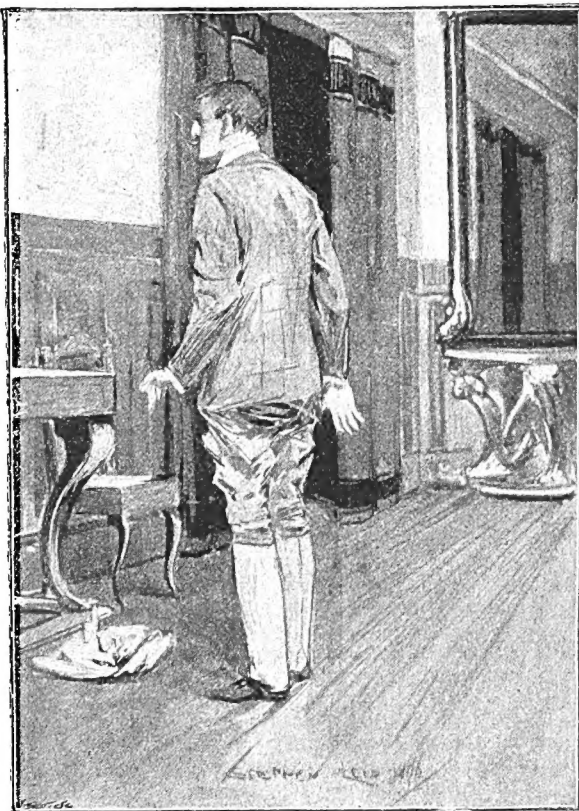
"There is only one thing more. You are surprised, no doubt, to find me so fully prepared for your sinister visit. I owe it to a dream which has come to me three times with great vividness. I am not a superstitious man, as you probably know, but in the present case I will admit that I have been strongly influenced by a vision. Twice last night I dreamt that a man—I admit I could not tell who; but I guessed that it was you—came to murder me as I sat at this desk. I would not permit the fact to influence me, however, and allowed myself to be left alone in the house, taking the precaution only of keeping a revolver by my side. I must have fallen asleep, however, for I dreamt the whole dream over again as I sat here, and I woke to find you standing over me, with the revolver in your hand. Use it, if you think it a wise thing to do, considering the little witness in the library. I promise you I will make no resistance."

The Baronet regarded me calmly. There was no doubt that he was quite in earnest, yet his lined old face never showed a tremor. I met his steady gaze as unflinchingly.

"I have heard you out patiently," I said. "Perhaps you will allow me to speak, at last. In the first place, here is your revolver, Sir Richard. Perhaps you will feel happier while you listen if you have the means of defending yourself against my homicidal intentions."

I handed the weapon to him as I spoke, and the old man took it without the slightest change of expression.

"I came here," I went on, "to make a last appeal to you to treat me fairly. When I came to Terral Court, six weeks ago, I came as a kinsman, expecting a kinsman's welcome. You were pleased to imagine that I was eager



*It fell from my startled fingers*

for the estate which will be mine when you die, and that I wanted to spy on you. You hated me accordingly, and tried to prejudice your daughter Mary against me. Thank Heaven! she was built in a less suspicious mould than you, and treated me with a frank friendliness. As I told you a week ago, I learnt to love her; but before speaking a word to her of love, I was fool enough to ask your permission. You ordered me out of the house where I had been staying as your guest. Since then I have been unable to obtain a moment's interview. To-day I came determined to see you, and argue my cause, at all odds. Finding the door ajar, and nobody about, I slipped up here, and found you asleep, with the revolver by your side. It was simply a regard for your safety which made me take it from the desk at the moment you awakened."

My cousin's face remained unreadable, and I went on:

"Now that you have kindly allowed me to explain my presence here, I will tell you what I came to say. It is this: With your will or without it, Sir Richard, I mean to win your daughter's heart, and make her my wife. Why, it seems a marriage made by Heaven!—when I shall inherit Terral Court—and should be

expected to turn her out of her home when you die, if I cannot make her its mistress. Why you object to a match that ought to delight you—you'll excuse me talking bluntly, sir—I cannot imagine. What I came here for to-day is to give you another chance of acting like a friend and a kinsman. Whether you do or not, I shall marry Mary. Why shouldn't you give me your approval in my wooing? I am not a poor man. Thank Heaven! I don't depend upon your death for the means of giving the woman I marry a home. My father used to tell me that he was looked down upon by the rest of the family, before he emigrated to the States—a sort of fool; but he managed to make a good pile out there, and has left me sufficient to buy a dozen Terral Courts, if fate and the entail didn't make me heir without."

I paused, but my cousin made no reply. He sat in an attitude of studious and unimpressible attention. After looking in vain for some evidence that my words were taking effect, I went on:

"You can easily be satisfied about my character, if considerations of that sort affect you. It is true that you have not concerned yourself much with my history while I was abroad, but I am sufficiently well known in Sydney for you to learn all about me by making inquiries there. When I spoke to you first about your daughter, sir, I said as much, and gave you names and addresses. I don't see why you should be prejudiced against me; I can't help being next heir to Terral Court. I am not eager for it, although, if I survive you, as in the ordinary course of nature I shall do, I shall be proud and happy to have the old mansion of our family. I came here simply because I am a kinsman. Why don't you act like one?"

I stopped then, determined that the old man should say something—good or bad.

"Have you finished?" he asked, after a minute's dead silence.

"Yes, Sir Richard."

"You have determined not to try murder, then? I thought the piece of paper in the library would dissuade you."

"You still choose to be unjust in your estimate of my motives."

The Baronet shrugged his shoulder.

"We will not quarrel about your motives," he replied coldly. "The practical question is, do you intend to kill me?"

"Of course not."

"Then there is no need for us to prolong the interview."

I kept my temper with difficulty.

"Am I to understand that you still object to me as a suitor for your daughter's hand?"

"Pardon me," said my cousin; "but that question was fully discussed at our last interview. Need we go over it again?"

"If you are determined to be deaf, sir, to the voice of reason and of justice," I replied hotly, "it will be idle to talk any more. I will bid you good-day, Sir Richard Terral."

The old Baronet rose and opened the door without speaking. His face wore under its solemnity a ghost of a smile, and I knew well enough as I left the room that my cousin was congratulating himself on the ingenious manner in which he had frustrated the designs of a would-be murderer.

I was boiling with rage, as well I might be. It was bad enough to be given the cold shoulder by my relative,

with no other reason than that I had been born out of England, son of the only member of the family plucky enough to make money in trade, instead of waiting for dead men's shoes. To be coolly treated as a criminal was beyond endurance. I determined never to set foot in the house again till Sir Richard Terral's death left me owner of it.

In the hall, however, was something which made me cool down quickly, and reconsider my decision. It was only a little pink-ribboned sun-bonnet, thrown carelessly on the oak table, but it conjured up the sweetest picture in the world for me, for it belonged to Mary Terral, whose sweet, womanly welcome had more than compensated for her father's cold unfriendliness.

I took the dainty arrangement of straw and ribbon in my hand, and was raising it to my lips, when it fell from my startled fingers, and went out of my mind utterly.

For I had heard in the house above me, so silent till that moment, the sharp crack of a revolver, and a short and terrible cry.

## II.

It was a shocking thing to enter the room, where I had a few moments before left Sir Richard Terral alive and well, to find the difference that those few moments had made. He lay on the floor, a huddled-up heap, from under which a dark mark, like a shadow, was spreading itself silently over the carpet. He was quite dead.

I had rushed upstairs, after the first momentary paralysis of will and thought, straight to Sir Richard's study. A dim idea was in my mind that the Baronet had accidentally shot himself with the revolver I had seen in his room. But when I bent over his inanimate body, trying to staunch the blood which came from a wound in the old man's side, I noticed that no revolver was to be seen. Then it dawned upon me that the window which I had left closed was standing wide open. The draught between it and the open door ruffled the pages of manuscript on the dead man's desk, and two or three sheets fluttered down to the floor, as if eager to hide that dark shadow which crept steadily across the carpet.

It was the manuscript, perhaps, which brought suddenly into my mind the thought of that other paper which Sir Richard Terral had written and hidden in the next room.

The window, as I said, was wide open; beneath it was the roof of the verandah, which ran along the front of the house. It would be quite possible for an agile person to climb up the verandah and so gain the study. He might have escaped that way also, after shooting Sir Richard, while I was running upstairs to the room. I looked out into the garden below, but the murderer, if he had gone that way, must have been long out of sight. That a murder had been committed was clear from the fact that the revolver was gone. The old man's treble dream had come true, after all.

Yes, there was no doubt that my cousin's death pointed to foul play, and lying in the little room beside me was the paper on which Sir Richard had denounced me, with his last written words, as his murderer. If it were found who would believe, my explanation of its existence?

Realising how much the fact menaced my safety, I hurried into the library and looked round anxiously for any clue that might guide me to the book in which the murdered Baronet's denunciation was hidden. But as

he himself had said, Sir Richard had been careful that nothing should be left to guide me in any search. The room was a small square one, with shelves on three sides. On the fourth were glass cases containing animals which my grandfather had collected. One of them, a hideous blue ape, had been mounted elaborately, with one forepaw grasping the branch of a tree. The other stretched out as if pointing.

With a half-superstitious hope, I followed the direction of the extended finger, and took out the book on the opposite shelf towards which it pointed, but I could find no sheet of manuscript. In the midst of my feverish search through the printed pages, the thought seized me that I was acting madly. Every moment that I delayed making public Sir Richard Terral's death I was adding to my chances of being saddled with the responsibility of it.

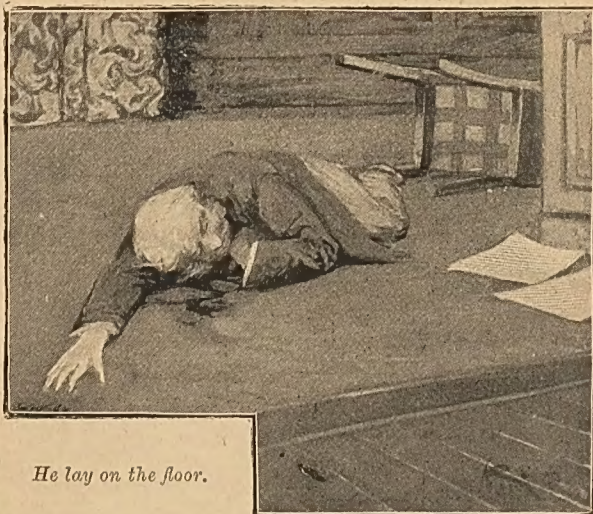
Suppose I were found rummaging my cousin's books, while his dead body lay in the next room, how could I avoid suspicion? With this idea in my mind, I put back the book I had taken in its place on the shelves, trembling now with anxiety lest the murder should be discovered before I had given notice of it.

I hurried out of the room and through the study, without stopping to take another glance at the inanimate heap by the writing-desk, and hurried out of the house and along the avenue which led to the high road, afraid to run, lest I might be taken for a fugitive leaving the scene of his crime, and unable to walk quietly in my anxiety to give the first news of Sir Richard Terral's death.

Fortune favoured me. Walking along the high road, not twenty yards from the avenue gates, was Constable Quiber, the Terralcombe policeman.

He turned as he heard my hurrying footsteps and touched his helmet.

"You are the very man I was looking for!" I exclaimed



*He lay on the floor.*

breathlessly; "my cousin, Sir Richard Terral, has been murdered!"

I wondered, while I said it, whether my manner would appear to him that of an innocent person.

He stared at me for a full moment, his green eyes wide open, and as round as his rubicund face.

"Great Heavens! murdered!" he said; and then a

smile of professional satisfaction spread over his whole visage, and he rubbed his hands together cheerfully.

"This is a big business, sir," he said briskly. "It is a good job you met me."

"Yes," I said. "Now I must go for a doctor, I suppose, although no doctor can do any good. He is shot through the heart."

"Yes, a doctor; I was just going to suggest it," said Quiper solemnly.

"You will go on to the house. Sir Richard is lying in the study. There is nobody at home."

"Yes—yes," said the constable. "I will go and make an examination. I will take your evidence when you come back with Dr. Hugh Smith, if you don't mind, sir."

Dr. Hugh Smith was not at home—a country practitioner never is—so I left a message for him, and hurried back to Terral Court.

Constable Quiper received me in the hall, where he was sitting at the oak table, with his handcuffs laid out before him, laboriously making notes in his pocket-book with a pencil stump. He had evidently been undisturbed in his examination.

"Well; have you discovered anything?" I asked, moving Mary's sun-bonnet further from his arm.

"Yes, sir; I've put down a good many important facts here."

He patted his pocket-book affectionately, closed it, and put it in his pocket.

"Have you a clue to the murder?" I asked, glancing at the handcuffs on the table.

"Possibly."

The man's face was full of unsearchable wisdom.

"Well; are you going to do anything?" I asked. I was anxious to know whether there was a chance of the murderer being caught. It would relieve my own anxiety so much.

Quiper rose solemnly and stood between me and the open door.

"I am afraid I shall have to arrest you, sir," he said stolidly. I felt my colour change. Was it possible that the dead man's denunciation had been found already?

"Arrest me? It is absurd!" I said keeping calm with an effort.

"Possibly, sir; but I think it is the course I ought to take. If it was found afterwards that you'd done it, the British Press would be down on me like a hundred of bricks; I may tell you and me, sir, it looks more professional to make an arrest; and besides, you had a good reason to shoot the old gentleman."

"This is nonsense," I said impatiently. The idea of an arrest was unbearable. Just the little time I had to search in Sir Richard's library for the incriminating paper would be lost while I went through the formality of proving my innocence.

"Look here, Quiper," I said insinuatingly, "it would be very inconvenient for me to be locked up just now, when I am anxious to investigate the horrible death of my cousin. You must think of some other means of gaining public approval."

But, rather to my surprise, the man was inexorable. Even the undignified offer of a five-pound note would not melt him.

"No, sir," he said firmly, but regretfully, "now I've got the chance of distinguishing myself, I couldn't play with it, not if you made it guineas."

I did make it guineas, but only to prove that Constable Quiper meant what he said; and as force was out of the question, I walked out of Terral Court a prisoner.

### III.

EIGHT days after the death of Sir Richard Terral, I emerged from the Town Hall of Doveton, our neighbouring market town—a free man. After a week's im-

prisonment, and considerable inquiry, which elicited nothing, the magistrates decided to acquit me, as, in spite of the interest I had in Sir Richard's death there was no evidence forthcoming to connect me with it.

The eminent barrister I had engaged to represent me made a stirring speech on my behalf, which induced the county magistrates to add to their decision the opinion



*Laboriously making notes.*

that no suspicion could possibly attach itself to me.

The inhabitants of Doveton seemed to be of the same mind, for they cheered me enthusiastically when I left the building. I had no taste for public sympathy just then, however. I was burning with impatience to get back to Terral Court, not to enter into possession of the estate, which was now mine, or even to see Mary Terral. I had only one purpose in my head, to ransack the library in which the late baronet had hidden his denunciation of me, to find the paper, at all costs, before it fell into the hands of others, above all, those of the girl I loved.

If I had known that Mary Terral loved me in return, I should not have feared so much. I should have told her everything confidently, expecting her to trust my assertion against her father's last written words. But I did not believe in my heart of hearts that my fair half-cousin did love me. She was interested in me, I knew, and sorry that I was treated by her father so unkindly, and she loved nobody else—all facts that made me hopeful in my desire to win her; but none of them likely to make her believe my word in spite of appearances. Would it be possible, if she once imagined me guilty of her father's death, to consider me with anything but horror?

Outside the Town Hall I pushed my way through the cheering crowd, and was driven off to Terral Court. It was a ride of ten miles; but the Doveton jehu did it very creditably, considering the animal he had between the shafts.

In less than an hour I was inquiring at the door for Miss Terral. It was with a feeling almost of relief that I heard she was away.

"She went away immediately after the funeral, sir," said the girl, "to friends in London."

I inquired their name, and the girl went to fetch the address which Miss Terral had left for her letters to be forwarded, while I waited in the hall, where Constable

Quiper had arrested me. I had been worrying so much over the hidden paper, and whether Mary would find it, that it actually never occurred to me that I was now master of the house in which I stood. I was soon reminded of it by the old housekeeper, who came back, instead of the maid, with Miss Terral's address.

She curtsied so frequently and so elaborately that I was filled with wonder, till she commenced a politic and complimentary congratulation on my return to freedom, which reminded me that she was my own servant. I copied down the address she gave me: "Miss Lewin-Brown, Eaton Square," and then I said I would run up and see the room where my cousin was killed.

The old lady curtsied lower than ever—perhaps to give me more confidence; for I was feeling nervous and excited, and possibly showed it. I resisted, with difficulty, her offer of refreshments, and walked up alone to the room where I had last seen my unfortunate cousin. There was little change in it, that I glanced behind the writing-desk with a sort of half-idea that I might see that strange huddled heap still lying there, the sight of which had frozen my blood eight days before.

I did not linger in the study, however, but walked straight through to the little library, with a half-superstitious certainty that I should find something there—I knew not what—to tell me how matters stood.

It was there, surely enough, in the form of an empty space on one of the shelves, from which a book had been removed. I had taken only a cursory glance round, while my cousin's dead body was lying in the outer room, but I was quite sure that no books had been missing then.

I called up the old housekeeper, who came in curtsying; as though she had never left off.

"Can you tell me who has taken a book away?" I asked, pointing at the empty space; and the old lady bobbed down to the ground.

"Yes, Sir John—Miss Terral, please Sir John. She was correcting an article which poor Sir Richard had written for the papers, and took it to London with her, Sir John. She left word with Mr. Reynolds, the lawyer, that she would return it, please Sir John, as soon as possible. I heard her telling the old gentleman, poor dear."

It was not quite clear whether the epithet applied to Miss Terral or the lawyer, but I was in no mood for wondering. For this book must be the one to which the murdered Baronet had referred—a book to which his daughter would refer for his sake, even if he were dead. My heart seemed to stop beating at the thought.

It was still possible, however, if the fatal paper was well hidden between the printed pages, that it might have escaped her noticed. If such good fortune was possible, I must not lose a moment. I expected I startled the old housekeeper by the abruptness with which I ended my inquiries and hurried down to the carriage, which had waited for me. She actually forgot to curtsy.

I was rather surprised, on leaving the house, to find two vehicles outside. The latest arrival was a private brougham, which appeared to be in the act of stopping in front of the house; an old gentleman got out as I ran down the front steps, and came towards me with a smile on his rotund face.

"Ah, Sir John! I thought I should meet you here," he said. "I was waiting for you in the Town Hall, but you got away so quickly that I was unfortunate enough to miss you. I am Mr. Reynolds of Reynolds and Fox."

I recognised the name as that of the family lawyer.

"Miss Terral wished me to assure you that Terral Court is quite ready for your occupation. She has removed all her own belongings, and is staying at present with friends till she decides where to take up her residence."

He was proceeding to launch into business matters with regard to the estate, when I interrupted him. It seemed a mockery listening to an account of my property when my very life and freedom were in jeopardy. I explained that I was anxious to catch a train at Doveton if he would excuse me.

"Certainly; any time, of course, will do for our business, which is purely formal," he said, and he bade me good-day.

But as I was entering my cab, the old gentleman hurried back from the brougham to me with a parcel in his hand.

"Miss Terral asked me to deliver this to you with apologies for borrowing it. I received it from her this morning by post, and thought I would bring it on myself, as she seemed anxious about it. It is a book out of your library, I believe; perhaps you would rather I left it at the house."

I surprised him by saying I would take it with me; and as soon as the vehicle started on its return journey, and I found myself alone, I tore off the paper wrappings feverishly and began turning over the pages. The book was a pretty large one—a "History of the Devonshire County Families"; to look between every two pages was a work of some magnitude, but I had achieved it by the time my driver drew up at Doveton railway station.

Then I spent the time in the train, while I was travelling to London, going through again and again, but always with the same miserable result. Not a trace of the dead man's denunciation was to be found. If this was, indeed, the book in which he had hidden the paper, there was little doubt that it had already fallen into other hands—Mary Terral's most likely. It was quite probable that the return of the "History" was simply meant as an announcement that the paper was found.

At any rate, I must find out whether Mary had seen it or not. The earliest moment that it was possible for a man to reach Eaton Square, after the arrival of the train at Waterloo, found me knocking at the door of the Lewin-Browns and asking for Miss Terral.

When the footman returned, I knew that the worst had happened.

"Miss Terral was engaged, and sorry she could not see me."

#### IV.

SINCE Mary must know that I had come from Doveton entirely for the purpose of my visit, her reply could have but one meaning. I turned away from the house in Eaton Square with a mist before my eyes. "What would Mary do?" I asked myself, and the still more important question: "What ought I to do?"

On my quickness of thought might depend both my life and honour.

If it had not been for the thought of Mary Terral, I should probably have made good my escape to a foreign country, rather than risk the necessity of proving my innocence in the face of my cousin's declaration.

But the love of Mary Terral had become already greater than the love of life with me, and the thought that she considered me a murderer lessened by contrast the fear of danger from the law. The thought of Mary spurred me on to a hazardous resolve. I would not wait

quietly for the dead man's accusation to hound me down. I would face it boldly, and of my own free will publish the whole true story to the world, before I was obliged to do so feebly, as a defence, when nobody would be likely to believe it.

The magistrate who had discharged me in Doveton Town Hall from complicity in Sir Richard Terral's death had struck me during my examination as a kind and broad-minded gentleman. As I had no friends in England, I decided to go to him with the tale of my cousin's unjust suspicion and accusation, and leave my fate in his hands.

If the world accepted my explanation, surely the woman I loved would accept it also! If they did not, well! what was life to me without her friendship and approbation? One thing I felt was impossible: to ask Mary Terral to believe that I was guiltless before I had proved it publicly. She should accept my innocence as the verdict of my fellow men, or not accept it at all. That alone could save her from the life-long agony of wondering whether she had allowed her friendship to bias her judgment.

I thought it all out on my way back to Doveton. There was no doubt that a full confession, so I called it to myself, because I had begun to feel like a criminal awaiting detection, a full confession to Mr. Fitz-Henry, the magistrate, was the best move under the circumstances.

My only fear was that I might be too late. Mary Terral was not the girl, if she thought me guilty of her father's death, to let any feeling of her own, or any fear of family disgrace, stand in the way and prevent her denouncing me. What if I were already a marked man?

I got so nervous by the time I reached Doveton, thinking of the probability of my arrest, that when I saw Constable Quiper standing on the platform, I turned quite cold, and had to wipe the sweat off my forehead and face.

"I must avoid him at all hazards," I said to myself, and luck favoured me.

When the train stopped, the policeman was standing by the little gateway where tickets were collected, looking towards the other end of the train. My compartment happened to stop opposite a great doorway which was not used for passengers, and at the moment we drew up at the platform, a porter was unlocking the door to take through a big truck-load of empty milk-cans.

My short residence in England had already given me an unlimited faith in the power of the shilling. I slipped out of the carriage, tendered the coin and my ticket, and in another moment was out in the street, where fortune favoured me again. One of the three ancient growlers which Doveton boasted was within call.

"Drive me quickly to Mr. Fitz-Henry's," I said, springing in—"Doveton House!"

The driver nodded and shook the reins. As the vehicle began to move, I lay back with a sigh of relief—one danger was past. But the next moment I started up, and thrust my head out of the window farthest from the station front.

"What, in Heaven's name, are you stopping for?" I shouted. "Drive on!"

The man went through an acrobatic performance in order to bring himself within speaking distance.

"There's somebody calling, sir," he exclaimed, in a conciliatory tone.

"Never mind—drive on!" I shouted again.

But it was too late. Constable Quiper, who had caught sight of me, and run out to stop the cab, was already at the window. It was all up with me.

"Well!" I said, forcing myself with a great effort to be calm, "what is it?"

"It is about the murder, sir," said Quiper, with an urbane smile on his round face. "I have been looking out for you in the station, sir."

"And for what, pray?" I felt that I had grown pale in spite of myself.

The policeman smiled more urbanely than ever.

"To tell you the news, sir. We've got the man who did it."

"What! You have arrested the murderer of Sir Richard Terral?"

The man's answer had been so unexpected that I could scarcely believe my ears.

"Yes, sir. I thought you would like to hear the news, seeing that you were a little mixed up in the affair—if we may call it so. Being in Doveton about it, and hearing there that you'd gone up to London without luggage, I thought I'd wait about a bit, having nothing else to do, on the chance of seeing you, and being the first to let you know. I'm told that you were thinking of offering a reward, sir, for the murderer's apprehension?"

"Certainly. Who is the man?"

"A poacher, sir, named Dave Ilack. You may have seen him, sir, idling about the village—a slouching, ne'er-do-weel, always in mischief. I suspected him from the first. You see, Sir John, he owed your cousin, the late baronet, a grudge."

"What for?"

"A pretty heavy sentence for poaching. Sir Richard happened to try him, as Justice of the Peace, you know, and dropped on him heavily. When the man came out he went round the place swearing he'd have his revenge. It seems he's had it. He got in at the window of the study, and shot the poor gentleman with his own pistol."

The cabman must have wondered at my sudden change of mood. The policeman stood talking at the cab-window, and I had not the least desire to hurry him or drive on.

"How did you find it out?" I asked, with an interest that must have rejoiced the constable's heart.

"Well, sir," he began, with an air of impenetrable wisdom, "there were two or three little things I found out when I took the case in hand. The pistol, for instance, was found in the shrubbery—"

"By the cook, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, by the Terral Court cook. Then, again, there were marks of boots with nails on the garden-bed beneath the verandah. That, I may say, removed a good deal of suspicion from your shoulders, sir, although personally I never suspected you in the least from the first."

"But you arrested me?"

"Police tactics, sir—tactics," said Quiper, shaking his head gravely. And he kept repeating the word as though it pleased him.

I asked him to proceed.

"Well," he said, "we—that is, I—set about searching for a man with nails in his boots. You see, sir, we police have to put one and one together and make four of it."

"You have to make a good deal out of a little," I said. "Yes; how did you manage to get from the nailed boots, which everybody in the village wears, to this

particular poacher? I hope you have quite proved that he is the right man?"

"Oh! yes, sir. We—that is, I—have got it all clear."

"What makes you sure? Has he confessed?"

"No, sir; but the woman he lives with has. He was fool enough to tell her about it, and then vex her over another woman. That is really what finally led us—that is to say, me—to arrest the man."

I could not help laughing at the superfluity of the deductions about boots and pistol on which Quiper so evidently prided himself.

"Well, constable," I said, "I won't forget the reward when my cousin's murderer is convicted, though I am afraid the woman has most claim to it. Meanwhile," I felt in my pocket for a sovereign, "you refused five guineas last time very properly, but I don't think you'll refuse this as a slight token of the appreciation I have of your astuteness and skill."

The cabman was looking down to see when he was to start.

"All right, driver," I said; "I won't go to Councillor Fitz-Henry's to-night. Can you drive me as far as Templecome Inn?"

#### V.

"VERY nice, the way Mr. Fitz-Henry alluded to me at the magistrate's inquiry, wasn't it, sir?" said Constable Quiper to me. "I suppose it would hardly be in a judge's line to allude to my success, eh, sir?"

We were in the Shire Hall at Doveton, where the assizes were held, awaiting, in the seat allotted to witnesses, the trial of David Ilack for murder. The trial had a tremendous interest for me, for his guilt was still unproved.

At the magistrate's inquiry, less than a month before, the man had stubbornly stuck to one reiterated assertion. He was the innocent victim of a woman's spite. It was true enough, he said frankly, that he bore no goodwill to the murdered man; but he had never thought of killing him, and Liz Smith was lying, if she said he had owned to doing it, drunk or sober.

He stood in the dock, now pale and stern-looking, while the judge took his seat, and the accusation was read out.

"A man who will be resolute to the end," I said to myself; and I wondered whether the crime would be brought home to him. It was selfish of me, no doubt,

but I could not help hoping that the case against the arrested man might be proved to the hilt, that no possibility of doubting his guilt might remain; for I felt that if David Ilack left the dock uncondemned, I must enter it.

As the accusation was being read out there was some sensation at the back of the court; a lady had fainted. I could not see from my position who it was; but Quiper, who had slipped out noiselessly, came back with the news that it was Mary Terral. I had not seen or heard from her since the murder. After the publication of Ilack's arrest I had made another attempt to see her, but with the same result as before. Upon which I determined to make no effort to arrive at an understanding until the actual murderer was convicted.

I had been straining my eyes, trying to catch sight of her in the court. I felt that she would be there; but not until the policeman told me she had been carried out in a swoon did I know for a certainty that Mary had put in her appearance at the trial.

I had not much time for thinking about it, however, for before the sensation caused by Miss Terral's illness had subsided, it was succeeded by a fresh and more startling one:

To everybody's surprise, David Ilack pleaded guilty.

The judge was so surprised that he made the man repeat the word which condemned him to death. The eminent counsel who had been engaged—Heaven knows how!—by his friends, to defend the accused man, sprang to his feet with a face full of surprise and consternation, trying to save the man in spite of himself. But the man would not let him speak.

"Shut up," he said roughly. "I did it, and everybody knows I did. What is the good waiting to have it badgered out of me. I don't want playing with, I only hope Liz Smith will like to feel she's hanged me!"

Everybody seemed disappointed. People who had obtained good seats, and brought sandwiches to enable them to sit out a long day's trial, were wondering what they should do with their afternoon. Constable Quiper turned crimson with disappointment and indignation.

"Why, they won't want any evidence," he exclaimed, with a fond look at his note-book. "What is the good of collecting evidence against a man like that?"

Not much good, certainly. The trial that everybody had looked forward to as such an interesting one was over in less than fifteen minutes, and David Ilack left the dock condemned to death.

His departure was followed by a rare hubbub, everybody praising or blaming his conduct. Then people rose, unwilling to relinquish the seats they had fought for a little earlier in the day, and tried to hide the needless sandwiches.

But suddenly everybody started and stood still, for a woman's voice, clear but trembling, sounded through the court.

"Your lordship has made a terrible mistake!" said the voice, and the words were followed by a dead silence.

"That is Liz Smith," said a man near me.

But I knew better. The voice was one which I recognised instantly, and I held my breath, wondering what Mary Terral would say.

People were making a way for her towards the bench, and I caught sight of her at last as she moved nearer the judge, whom she addressed. I was startled by the terrible change in her since I had seen her last; her face was thin and deathly pale, her steps seemed weak and



Dave Ilack.

tottering as she moved slowly through the people in the body of the court.

The judge had been whispering with those beside him on the bench. Now he addressed the girl who had spoken to him: Did she wish to make a statement! If so, she was at liberty to do so.

Then Mary's clear, thrilling voice was heard again in the silent court.

"They tell me, sir," she said, "that you have just condemned a man to death for the murder of my father. That man is innocent. The real murderer is another. His name is on this paper in my hand."

Then everybody looking saw that she was holding up a small piece of India paper, which trembled in her fingers.

"And who is it you accuse?" asked the judge.

The lovely girl gazed slowly round the court and her eyes met mine.

"The murderer sits there!" she said slowly, pointing at me. "It is Sir John Terral!"

All eyes were directed at me.

The denunciation had come at last. It was too late to affect me, however. Mr. Fitz-Henry explained that I had made a full avowal of the affair to him before

the trial, and had left it in his hands whether I should place myself under arrest or no.

It was quite a trial in an informal way, and I think the verdict of all acquitted me.

At any rate—which was the most important thing to me—Mary Terral begged me to forgive her when we were alone, after it, in the little waiting-room beside the public court.

I told her frankly she had nothing to forgive.

"But why did you wait so long, Mary," I asked, "before denouncing me?"

"Oh, I could not bear to do it!" clasping her slender hands. "Nothing but the thought that you were allowing an innocent man to suffer would have made me speak."

"Because I am one of the family?" I asked quietly; and the girl flushed hotly. "Or because you like me—a little, Mary?" I went on, encouraged by the flush.

She did not answer then. It was not till days after that she told me.

"I think I must have loved you all through it, dearest!"

"Nor could it have been so terrible for me!" I answered.

GEOFFREY SULLIVAN.



"I think I must have loved you all through it, dearest."

## Jumbled Story Competition.—21.

ON page 653 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given and pasted on the paper containing the effort.

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

- 1 SHORT STORIES on or before Monday,
- 2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
- 3 JUMBLED STORY.
- 4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
- 5 November 23rd, and envelopes must be marked
- 6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
- 7 reach this office.
- 8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
- 9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
- 10 4-9-6-2-7-8-1-5-3-12-11-13-10.
- 11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
- 12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
- 13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the first of the readers living in Ireland who succeeds in forwarding the correct, or most nearly correct, solution.

## HAVE YOU SCENT

For a sample bottle of HOME NOTES BOUQUET? If not, forward 1s. 2d. without delay, which sum includes postage. This perfume is of the most elegant and refined kind. Like many another good thing, it is, however, put up "in small parcels," or rather, let it be said, is sold double-distilled. Its virtues must, therefore, not be judged by its bulk for, owing to its extra strength, it is very lasting, so but a few drops are required.

## ANY CHRISTMAS GIFTS

you wish to present to lady friends might well take this form, so it has been arranged to supply this beautiful scent in three sizes. No. 1 is to be had for 6s. 6d., No. 2 for 4s., and No. 3 at 2s. If you wish to receive the HOME NOTES BOUQUET per post, kindly inclose 3d. extra for that purpose.

## MOST LADIES ARE VERY PARTICULAR

as to what perfume they use, so take the advice of one who knows when you are assured that this scent is not of the cheap, overpowering kind. It is, moreover, sold in handsome cut-glass bottles, an ornament in themselves to any toilet-table.

SEE PAGE 652.

# PARDON—MR. FEREURAFUL

Jumbled Story No 21.

1 The two men faced each other. One lay back in  
 2 an easy chair before the fire, and closed his eyes.  
 3 He rose from his chair, and from a cabinet drew  
 4 Lord Eskdale.  
 5 Paul Arnoff's chambers in Piccadilly were the  
 6 essence of luxury and refinement. His furniture,  
 7 his innumerable curios were the envy of all who  
 8 were approaching the door. He looked hurriedly  
 9 out a little phial, marked "Poison."  
 10 A grand piano nearly filled up one side of the  
 11 mantelpiece was covered with invitation cards.  
 12 Then I shall be rich—rich."  
 13 He was tall, olive complexioned, with rough black  
 14 work to do yet.  
 15 Paul Arnoff himself looked handsome enough as  
 16 stronger will than he had thought. He sank down in  
 17 a chair, weak and ill. The other stood before him,  
 18 I am tired of living My property and money will  
 19 die."  
 20 A heavy tread was coming up the stairs. Arnoff  
 21 knew him.  
 22 With a fierce curse of mingled anger and fear, he  
 23 curled up in his basket. The mirror over the  
 24 picture over the piano. A paroxysm of anger came  
 25 obedient, sprang on to his knee. He shook out a  
 26 little heap of ashes that lay in the fender.  
 27 Such was Paul Arnoff.  
 28 "Now," said Paul Arnoff, "you will take that  
 29 room. In a corner beside it a little white dog lay  
 30 on to the ground.  
 31 "He shall die," he cried. "Why should he live?  
 32 Come and see me."  
 33 A door banged.  
 34 A letter lying on the table, addressed in his  
 35 his priceless inlaid cabinets, his pictures, his silver,  
 36 breathed heavily, and gradually dropped asleep.  
 37 "Why didn't he die?" he cried. "Why does he live?"  
 38 A coal dropped with a click to the grate.  
 39 An oil painting of a pale, weak man hung over  
 40 and shivered. When his master went over to him a  
 41 moment later a little mass of ashes was all that  
 42 go to my brother, Paul Arnoff."  
 43 He called his dog to him, and the little animal,  
 44 will kill him—stay.  
 45 Arnoff did not hear it. His head nodded, he  
 46 paralyse you, and you are at the man's mercy, and  
 47 blunder."  
 48 A moment later his body fell with a crash.  
 49 How warm it was there! How comfortable! He  
 50 rattled. He upset his chair, and glanced under-  
 51 neath. The door opened. Then his eyes fell on a  
 52 woman looked down from their frames.  
 53 Someone opened the door, and closed it again,  
 54 as he swaggered past them.  
 55 Arnoff uttered a fierce curse.  
 56 "Fool! Fool, that I am," he hissed. "I have  
 57 heard the sound and started to his feet. The steps  
 58 worked, and turning out the lights, went to bed.  
 59 He dwelt lovingly over the word.  
 60 He would move in a moment.  
 61 The wretched man did so.  
 62 \* \* \* \*

63 And Paul Arnoff was cruel and diabolical.  
 64 Arnoff took the confession in his hand and read  
 65 the piano. This was Lord Eskdale, Arnoff's  
 66 brother, one of the richest peers in the kingdom.  
 67 "Now go to your basket, and let me see if you  
 68 free will—that is—my will."  
 69 "To-morrow, I will go and see him. My mind  
 70 whom people avoided instinctively when they met  
 71 few grains of powder from the phial into his palm.  
 72 He drew off his gloves, and threw them savagely  
 73 round for his brother's confession. The handle  
 74 though his black brows were drawn together in a  
 75 hair, which sparkled and glistened like a cat's when  
 76 he does what he likes with you."  
 77 "Write this: 'I am going to kill myself of my  
 78 gambled away everything—everything.'  
 79 The confession of the dead man that was to clear  
 80 shall master his. My will shall be his will. Then I  
 81 would like to go sleep. But he must not. He had  
 82 he fell into a hypnotic sleep.  
 83 He leant his elbow on the mantelpiece, and gazed  
 84 it through. He was exhausted. The man had a  
 85 teeth in a cruel, sneering expression.  
 86 Arnoff took a phial from his pocket, and shaking  
 87 him in the street, and then turned and gazed after  
 88 my hunting accident now, but as weak as a baby.  
 89 Below this, photographs of more than one beautiful  
 90 pen in your hand, and write as I tell you. It will  
 91 gave it to the other. He drank it off eagerly.  
 92 He laughed when he saw how well the poison  
 93 brother's handwriting, caught his eye.  
 94 The dog crept to his corner, curled himself round,  
 95 out some powder mixed a little water with it, and  
 96 the strong arm of a policeman upheld him.  
 97 "First I must test it," he said. "I must not  
 98 not be long," he added to himself, "before I am  
 99 right through you, and get into your brain and  
 100 fierce scowl, and his lips came back over his white  
 101 moment later he was stiff and stark.  
 102 "Thanks for inquiries," it ran. "I am almost over  
 103 strong, masterful, his mind taking control over  
 104 passes. Presently the weak man's eyes closed, and  
 105 one of his enemies once said. "Then they burn  
 106 over him.  
 107 "First he shall write a confession. Ha, ha! yes,  
 108 his, his eyes flashing, his hands making soothing  
 109 his murderer's name slipped from his fingers. It  
 110 would have fallen in a swoon to the ground, had not  
 111 he strode into his rooms that cold November night,  
 112 slid down his knee, and shot off into the fire. A  
 113 side, and drink it off, and so kill himself of his own  
 114 own free will. No one is to blame for my death.  
 115 and there was a sound of hurrying feet.  
 116 "His eyes repel, and yet fascinate you horribly."  
 117 he shall write his own confession, and sign it, and  
 118 then he will take the poison that I shall put by his  
 119 into the fire. Presently his eyes wandered to the  
 120 one laid one's hand upon it; in a word, a man  
 121 remained of it.  
 122 "Sign it," said Arnoff.  
 123 "Eat it up," he said, and the dog obeyed him.  
 124 It was a cruel, diabolical deed.



UPON the posters which hung on the outside of the carriage she was styled:

MDLLE. ANTONIA,

SOMNAMBULE EXTRALUCIDE.

Her mother called her Zette—her real name was Suzanne.

She was a pretty girl, not very tall, with fair complexion, and long black hair that she let float about her during her consultations, though ordinarily she wore it in a loose coil upon the nape of a neck that was perfect.

Never having done much work, her hands were delicate and well-shaped—she was enough of a coquette to wish to keep them so. She had a finely moulded form, and to have seen her simply dressed in some quiet colour, with the gait of a wise little work-woman, one would never have suspected her strange calling.

Her mother, Madame Floury, was as little, like others of her class, as her daughter. About her there was nothing in common with the shrews who frequent fairs in red dresses and soiled skirts. She had the air of a little merchant who was good and proper, with a winning, honest smile, and people stopped before the carriage, and even entered there (without thinking of the charlatanism on the posters) in order to see the interior of this small dwelling that smelled so sweet.

The vehicle was painted brown, with a thread of gold running the length of the plinths. There was a tiny balcony in front of it, and on this balcony convolvuli and nasturtiums, planted in boxes, twined about wires up to the roof, where they clustered in bright-hued bunches.

Along the route persons stared in amazement at this queer coach all covered with garlands of flowers.

The two women were always together, but associated very little with their neighbours. They were not proud, and having the best of hearts were the first to offer to care for a sick child, or to give to others in distress. Indeed, the foreigners who knew them well loved them sincerely, even though they did feel somewhat oppressed by what they termed "their grand manners."

There was, however, someone who was all devotion to Zette and her mother.

It was a young gymnast of two-and-twenty, in a large travelling circus, that had very nearly the same itinerary as Mme. Floury. His name was Jacques, but on the play-bills they spelt it Jack. He was exceedingly

handsome and of no common type. There was fire in his eyes and much intelligence in his smile. There was, too, much tenderness in this same smile, especially when he spoke to Zette. His love for this pretty brunette—so unlike any other woman he had seen about him in his wanderings—was very sincere.

Near her he felt himself quite another man to what he was in the circus. There was such an atmosphere of honesty surrounding Zette that his own manners, when with her, were altogether different from what they had been, and he was astonished at how well they became him.

Then, too, he had dreamed of being loved by this sweet girl, and of never being separated from her. Their positions accorded admirably. His salary was good, and some day perhaps he might enter one of the great circuses of Lyons, or Paris. It would be charming to find so sweet a little wife awaiting his coming after his work was done.

He had often spoken to Zette of these plans. He loved her so dearly that it could not be possible she did not love him at least a little.

Zette always listened silently, visibly touched by what she heard, and he thought each time she would say "yes," but when he had finished by asking, with such pleading eyes: "Will you be my wife, Zette?" she replied very gravely: "No."

Then Jacques would be astonished. Why not? Could it be that she did not believe him when he said he loved her—that she had no confidence in him—that she did not love him?

"Yes, I love you," Zette answered sweetly; "but I do not wish to marry you."

And she would never say why.

One day, however, Mme. Floury blamed her for refusing the hand of this brave lad.

"Listen, mother," she said; "I adore Jacques, and I

believe I shall always remain single because I do not wish to marry him. Do you remember the day when we went together to the circus? I saw, as we entered, how all the women who were there turned their *lorquettes* towards him, and afterwards they smiled and talked about him, and tried to attract his attention by applauding him. I ought, perhaps, to have been proud to think that this man, whom they all wanted, loved me, and that I had only to say the word to be his wife. Ah, well, in my heart there was nothing but jealousy. I wanted to tear the *lorquettes* away from those women. From what I suffered that evening I understood how much I might suffer if we were married. No, that cannot be. He is too handsome, see? Suppose, some day, when he had grown tired of me, one of those women should take him away from me. I would die, surely. You know now, mother, why I cannot say yes."

But notwithstanding this obstinate refusal, which he could not explain, Jacques came every day. He no longer mentioned the subject to Zette, understanding that he was contending against a fixed resolve, except once when he said to her:

"You will not have me, Zette, and I do not wish any other woman. Some day, though, you may change your mind, and then you need only hold out your hand, and say to me: 'Let us be married,' and it will make me happy."

So, after thus simply settling the affair, Jacques was like a brother in the house. It was he who in the spring-time planted the seeds in the boxes upon the little balcony; it was he who twined the tendrils about the wires; and it was he who, at all seasons, furnished the gilded porcelain vases that held the flowers.

These flowers were a great luxury to Zette.

This state of things did not long continue, however. The young girl was now twenty and Jacques twenty-six. One evening he presented his friends with tickets to the circus. It was the last day of a long-continued fair, and Zette and her mother had nothing to do. So they decked themselves in their best and went early.

Mme. Floury was much amused with the horses, the rope-dancers, the clowns, the trained dogs. Zette thought only of Jacques, whose name on the programme occupied a line to itself, and whose apparatus was hanging up at the top of the high tent. The latter consisted of bars, with copper balls that shone, a maze of trapèzes, ropes and pulleys, and the young girl, a little frightened, inquired if it all was secure.

At last the first part of the performance was over, and, keeping time to a slow waltz, Jacques appeared. He was as beautiful as a god in his silk tights that displayed to advantage his superbly moulded form, and, for the rest, his costume consisted of a black satin *caleçon*, spangled with gold.

After having responded by a bow to the applause of the crowd, and by a smile to Zette's smile, he darted up a rope to his trapèze.

The preliminaries were gone through with amid prolonged bravos, for the handsome gymnast was a great favourite, and it was truly a pleasure to see him act—the supple body so pliant yet so marvellously exact in its movements.

Then there came silence—even the orchestra was still.

It was to be the hit of the evening, and a new feat that was to give an added glory to the circus. He was to leap from one trapèze to another, with his face and head covered, then suddenly drop from this giddy height upon a net stretched below him. The two trapèzes were swinging with a regular movement. Jacques, standing

on a little board, his head enveloped in a black velvet bag, put forth his hand blindly. The crowd held its breath. The man was going to jump—he had jumped!

A piercing cry rent the air.

Missing the second trapèze, which had been badly regulated, Jacques fell to the net, but it proved too frail to support his weight, and striking upon the seats, he rolled to the ground, where he lay motionless.

With a cry of horror, Zette sprang to her feet, rigid and pale, her eyes fixed upon the spot where the men were now carrying away the apparently lifeless body of her friend.

Then suddenly seizing her mother's arm, "Come," she said, in a hollow voice.

Breaking through the crowd, the two women reached the stables, but were there refused admission. For a long while they remained at the entrance, listening to what was said around them, but no one knew anything. Finally, Mme. Floury saw a clown whom she recognised as one of Jacques' friends. He was just coming out of the refreshment-room when she called him.

"The net broke the force of the fall," said the man, whose face looked troubled, even under the paint. "The doctor says he will be lame for life, and that this ends for him his profession as a gymnast. Poor fellow! But he has something laid up for a rainy day."

Mme. Floury looked at Zette; she was very pale, and her eyes were fixed upon the man as he spoke, as though trying to find if he lied. At least she said: "Let us go."

The two women did not speak as they traversed the grounds of the fair, and they were still silent as they ascended their own little staircase. But when Mme. Floury had lighted the candle, she saw Zette sitting beside the bed with a strange smile on her lips; she felt frightened for her, and went to her.

"Of what are you thinking, little daughter?" she asked, trying to reassure herself.

Then Zette laid her head upon her mother's shoulder, with a childlike gesture.

"I think—that now I can marry Jacques," she told her.

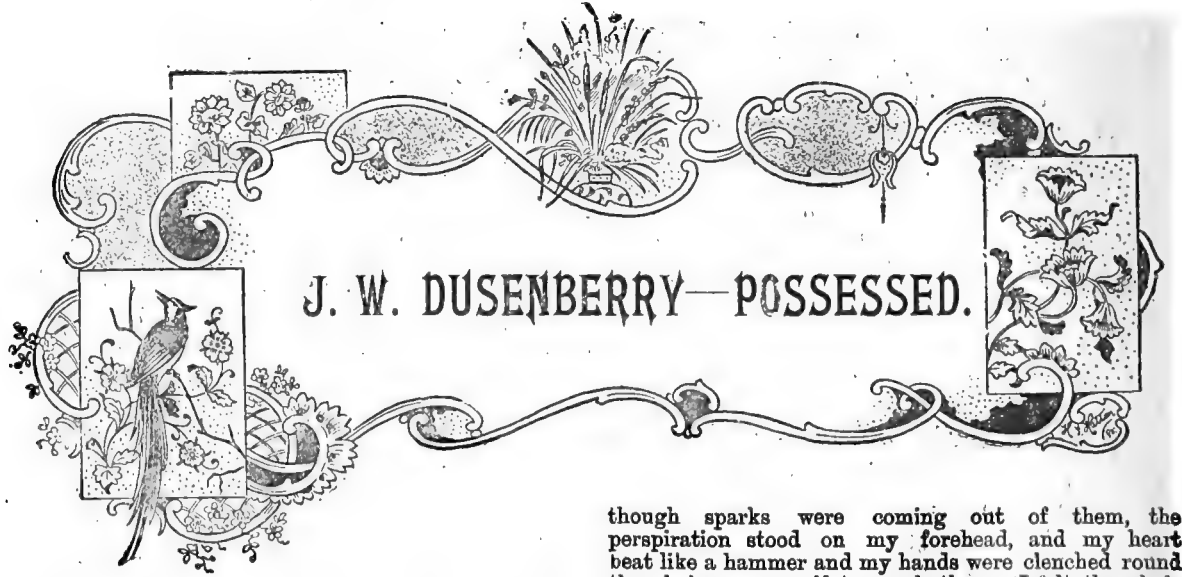
EMILE ROUSTAN.

#### RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION, No. 18.

£5 has been sent to Miss Mary E. Spencer, 8, Bettridge Road, Fulham, S.W. (first correct attempt); and £1 each to Miss J. Walker, 24, Porchester Gardens, Hyde Park, W.C.; Miss Smyth, 129, Forton Road, Gosport, Hants; Mr. A. W. Clarke, Divisional Superintendent's Office, G.W.R., Bristol; Mr. Nicholson, Red Hall, Gainsborough; Mrs. C. Miller, 16, Mark Lane, E.C.

#### KEY.

|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 7   | 13  | 88  | 103 | 102 | 72  | 104 | 80  | 29  |
| 8   | 109 | 107 | 83  | 73  | 62  | 116 | 27  | 56  |
| 1   | 47  | 23  | 64  | 94  | 22  | 14  | 76  | 127 |
| 3   | 91  | 110 | 71  | 70  | 34  | 121 | 118 | 38  |
| 2   | 42  | 49  | 12  | 111 | 69  | 130 | 115 | 101 |
| 5   | 59  | 25  | 68  | 74  | 15  | 50  | 63  | 67  |
| 4   | 46  | 119 | 55  | 39  | 17  | 112 | 97  | 129 |
| 6   | 105 | 51  | 79  | 40  | 28  | 93  | 58  | 20  |
| 9   | 100 | 95  | 44  | 120 | 45  | 108 | 131 | 106 |
| 48  | 99  | 33  | 19  | 26  | 60  | 21  | 98  | 37  |
| 82  | 43  | 87  | 77  | 126 | 24  | 90  | 18  | 117 |
| 41  | 75  | 65  | 124 | 92  | 35  | 30  | 16  | 85  |
| 84  | 96  | 114 | 57  | 122 | 54  | 52  | 61  | 133 |
| 113 | 125 | 10  | 123 | 89  | 132 | 32  | 31  |     |
| 86  | 81  | 11  | 78  | 128 | 66  | 36  | 53  |     |



## J. W. DUSENBERRY—POSSESSED.

TRANSMIGRATION of souls? Yes, sir, as true as daylight. A few weeks ago I read an account of a man who dreamt that he had substituted himself for another man, taking on his appearance and his manner of speech.

The story laid so powerful a hold on me that I was unable to settle down to my evening's work, and I started out on an aimless walk, to meditate upon it. The supremacy of will; that was what it meant—individual strength. Why might it not drive the consciousness of somebody else out of him and allow the stronger mind to take possession?

From sheer force of habit, because business takes me there almost every day, I turned into the lobby of the D— Hotel. It was the echo of my own feet on the tiled floor that made me look up to see where I was and how I got there, and it vexed me a trifle to see how absent-minded I was becoming. Absent-minded! There you are again. What does that mean, if not that the mind may take excursions out of the body? Humph!

I dropped into one of the arm-chairs that are ranged along the lobby, and lit a cigar. They knew me quite well there, so I was sure of remaining undisturbed for some hours, if I chose. I became meditative again, and as the smoke of my weed circled round my head, I noticed J. W. Dusenberry lazily sprawled in a chair, across the way, and drowsily reading an evening paper. I was glad that he had not seen me, for I do not like him. He "did" me in a whist deal once; he received a pair of embroidered slippers intended for me, by mistake, and kept them; but worst of all he went to the West-end when he learnt that I was negotiating for a choice corner there, and bought that identical place—at my figure, too, virtually turning me out.

Great heavens! Why not effect a transmigration and occupy him! I felt that in a single evening I could revenge myself on this man, and none would be the wiser. I determined to try, and bending my eyes on him I willed, with all the nervous power that was in me, that he should lose his consciousness, and that my own should replace it. My eyes tingled as

though sparks were coming out of them, the perspiration stood on my forehead, and my heart beat like a hammer and my hands were clenched round the chair arms as if to crush them. I felt the whole force of my being gathered into focus, and just in that focus sat Dusenberry, oblivious to what was happening to him.

Presently his eyes grew heavy, his head sank forward, the paper dropped from his hand; I saw a little shudder pass through him, and at the same instant I heard a ringing in my ears and felt a momentary darkness closing upon me; I was giddy and clutched my chair still harder for support; then I shook myself together, convinced that it was better to leave experiments of that kind to the professors, for it was too weakening.

But, hullo! What did this mean? How had the door, which was on my right, got so suddenly over to my left? And who—what—that man! Asleep in the chair! It was myself! I looked down at my clothes. Amazement! I was Dusenberry!

I uttered a faint cry, that caused two or three loungers near me to look up, but affecting to have been choked with cold I caught at my throat—no, it was Dusenberry's throat—and coughed savagely a few times, in a voice that was harsh, and that I recognised as never having been mine before. Then I dropped back into my chair and stared at my recent self in sheer amazement. The fascination of my old body was too tense to endure long. The sight of it filled me with a kind of dread, as if I might, after all, be looking at it from a wholly disembodied standpoint. How, if I were really to die and be unable to get back, thus keeping Dusenberry out of his place for the rest of his days? It was too uncanny.

I sprang to my feet; that is, I should have done so, if I had my own feet to spring to, but I found that the ones I was using were Dusenberry's, and there was not much spring to him, for he weighed three stones more than I. It also surprised me a little to find that Dusenberry did not see colours precisely as I did, for through his eyes there was a prevalence of yellowish tints, but that might have been because he was bilious. With studied carelessness I started towards the bar, thrusting my—that is, Dusenberry's—hands into my—that is, Dusenberry's—pockets, as I went. There was a purse of sovereigns in the right pockets.

It was no part of my scheme to rob my victim, though

I intended to have revenge on him before I was through, and I did not want to touch his money. I had enough of my own. But, good gracious! it was on my other self. There were twenty good £5 notes in the pocket of that unconscious figure across the lobby that belonged to me. After some delay caused by an unaccountable aversion to touching my body, I went over and shook myself. I was breathing heavily, and was, apparently, in a deep sleep. Somehow I appeared different from the way I supposed I did, my impressions in that respect having been based partly on the reports of my mirror and partly on the assurance of my wife—made soon after we had been married.

I never realised, for instance, how large the mole on my cheek was, and I resolved to raise whiskers forthwith. But the money. Dropping into a chair beside myself I began to explore my pockets. My fingers had just closed over the notes and cash when I felt the clasp of a stout hand on my shoulders. It was one of the porters. "Aha, ye blatherskite!" he cried. "We've caught you at it."

Then the situation dawned upon me. I was a thief. But no. Dusenberry was the robber, and would get the blame. He was something of a thief, after all, confound him. Yet, if he were arrested I should be the sufferer, for the time being, at least, and to all appearances I was the sufferer anyhow; but for this once I would not complain of Dusenberry. I—that is, he—assumed a dignified air and said: "Desire the clerk to step this way."

The porter would not leave me, but he held up his hands and beckoned with four fingers to the night clerk, who came directly. I knew him, so it was one of the most natural things in the world to remark: "Good-evening, Mr. Martin," through Dusenberry.

"I do not know you, sir," he answered.

I had forgotten who I was, and the porter took advantage of my momentary confusion to say in a loud voice, full of disbelief, "Look at that, now."

"My friend, Mr. Ferguson," I continued, pointing to my sleeping self, "is subject to a curious lapse, like catalepsy. He is liable to be in this condition for a day or two. Kindly keep his watch and money, and give him a room at my expense. I will pay for a day in advance."

I had not intended to do it, but under the circumstances, I had to draw out Dusenberry's money. My manner was so frank, and the purse was so large, that the clerk was impressed and the porter quieted. He summoned another man, and the two of them carried me—that used to be—off upstairs somewhere.

"I know Mr. Ferguson," said the clerk. "I'm afraid he's been drinking."

"Never, sir," I answered, "he would not allow himself to be overcome with liquor. Mr. Ferguson is one of the most moral, most temperate, most admirable young men of my acquaintance. Drinking? Absurd! Take the best care of him, give him what he likes, and I will pay the bill." I slapped a note into the hand of this functionary, and left half a sovereign for the porter; then I left the hotel in a hurry, while the good impression was strong, wiping the perspiration from Dusenberry's brow. On reaching the street I started to walk West, but I noticed a tendency in my legs—I mean Dusenberry's legs—to go the other way. Presently I was startled by a remark: "It's pretty tough, I think, that a man can't do as he likes with his own body."

I had not authorised that statement; I was thinking of something else at the moment, yet the voice was the one that I was using! Horrors! There were two of us in Dusenberry! He had partly recouped himself.

The situation was perilous. I asserted myself at once by crying: "Silence!" in a loud voice—same voice. "Another word and I will go to the foot of the street and jump off the Embankment."

"And my insurance premium not paid for this quarter!" groaned Dusenberry.

"I command you to subject yourself to my will, and if you behave yourself I shall probably give you back yourself in the morning, for you don't improve on close acquaintance. Go to sleep and remain in that condition until I call you."

Dusenberry subsided, and I was in charge once more. As a reward for his obedience I took him into the best restaurant in town and gave him a good dinner; then I let him go to the opera and occupy a box, though he did not care for that, so I went out after the first act and went into a few bazaars and things. I loathe a bazaar, but I was teaching Dusenberry a lesson. I subscribed with his hand and in his writing to various building funds and missionary funds and charity funds and funds for orphans, and funds for clergyman, and I don't know what all—funds aggregating a stiffish little sum of several hundreds.

But I knew that Dusenberry could stand it, and he was mean in money matters. It would serve my vengeance and be for the peace of his soul to do some good with his money. On leaving the last place I slipped and fell downstairs, for I could not get used to Dusenberry's thick legs. Good! I was bruising Dusenberry. I went into a café and drank a pint of heavy, sweet liqueur. Good! Dusenberry would have the gout. I went into the park and sat on a bench in a chill wind with hat off and coat unbuttoned. Good! I was giving Dusenberry a cold. I returned to the hotel, a little anxious about my real self, when an important person blocked the way and said in a loud voice: "Now then, sir, I want to know when you're going to pay my bill."

It was humiliating to be detained and addressed in this public manner, and I started to blush; but, after all, this was Dusenberry's business. Let him blush if he knew how. I would see if he did. "Never, sir," I answered. And Dusenberry didn't blush. "After being dunned in this open and offensive way I shall not pay you one penny."

"You won't, won't you? We'll see to-morrow."

"Go away. I do not know you."

"Ha, ha! That's good. You'll make my acquaintance in the courts, then, soon."

"Go to the devil!" You see, I was getting up a reputation for rudeness for Dusenberry, and now I had precipitated him into a lawsuit.

Presently I found that I was growing tired, for Dusenberry must have been up late on the night before. And it seemed to me then that I had had enough of my present form. I began to think strongly of home, of my comfortable bed, of my bath, of my cool, fresh linen in the locker. Yes, I would go there, but first I would go to the hotel, get myself, and leave Dusenberry asleep there.

I entered the hotel, looked at the register and requested to be taken to room 24.

"That's where Mr. Ferguson was put, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Wall, he's gone."

"What!"

"He sobered up just a little while ago—"

"How dare you say that he has sobered up? He was no more drunk than I am."

"Excuse me, but you are quite sure—I thought—as you were coming in that your breath—however—  
The cordials, the fatigue! Had I been getting Dusenberry drunk?"

"You are sure he has gone?"  
"I saw him leave half-an-hour ago."

"Good-night." And I strode from that place in an agitation of soul that ought to have turned Dusenberry's hair grey. I had left that place unguarded. I was now, most likely, walking about the streets of that city, perhaps in the vilest slums, a prey to villainy and accident, a creature without a mind, deaf, blind, unfeeling! What would—what had—become of me? Suppose I were at the bottom of the river at this moment, and should be doomed to occupy the inferior body that I lived in at present? Despair! Suppose that Dusenberry's personality should wake up and try to evict my personality and suppose that while I was asleep he should succeed in doing it!

Again, despair! I might be maimed or crushed; my clothes might at this moment be in possession of a gang of corner loafers who would pawn them on the morrow for beer, obliging me to be *perdu* in the friendly screen of a coal yard until night fell again and I was enabled to steal home without exciting comment. I rushed aimlessly from street to street, making Dusenberry puff as I did so for some minutes before I could form any plan of action, the dread of being permanently locked in with Dusenberry, in his now hated form, driving me almost mad. I went to the nearest police station and inquired if anything had been seen of a tall, good-looking man of thirty-seven, dressed in excellent taste and of polished demeanour, who had left the D—Hotel while suffering from the effect of a sunstroke?

"Sunstroke in October?" asked the sergeant, lifting his brows.

"Oh—ah—well, it was something like it."

"Well, we ain't seen nothin' of 'im."

I left the place in a new frenzy. On reaching a dark and lonely street I sat on the curb stone and tried to weep, but there were no tears in Dusenberry, and I had to give it up. All this time I had a vague sense of relation to my old self that kept me from utter loss of hope. I remembered that during my ardent wish to be at home a vivid picture, almost like a sensation, of myself going in that direction accompanied the thought. How it, after all, I had retained enough power over my unconscious self to cause it to make that journey? I rushed away in the direction of my flat, and arrived at the door in a bewilderment of hope and fear. The clock struck three as I turned the corner. What a night it had been! I felt in my pocket for my key. Clump, that I was! I had only Dusenberry's key. I knew that if I broke into the house I was liable to get Dusenberry shot and also arrested, and I did not want to go as far as that with him; so I resolved on an expedient hardly less bold; I rang.

Somebody was up and moving about the place. Oh, if it could only be—if I dare hope—I bent all my thought to it.

In three minutes the knob rattled, the door swung open. Dim as the light was, there was no mistaking the figure that stood there. It was myself. "Saints be praised!" I cried. I did get there ahead of myself, after all.

The figure in the doorway stood still, gazing straight into the dark with fishy, unseeing eyes, and breathing heavily, like one who walks in his sleep. Listening at the stair foot I could hear no sound except the snoring

of the man on the third floor. The arrival of this automaton of myself had not been known to anybody. My wife was asleep. The bell had been unheard, and only my will had brought this figure to the door.

Seizing it I drew it passively out, closed the door softly behind it and led it up the street to where the shadow of a lime tree fell in a black gloom round some yards of pavement. I leaned it against the tree trunk, grasped its hands and put every atom of my will into an imperious demand to change.

Again, the momentary darkness, faintness, giddiness; then I found myself supported by the tree, looking at Dusenberry, who was tightly clutching my hands and perspiring. I shook him off. He was dazed, and showed a desire to sit down. Taking him by the arm, I walked him to the corner, where a bright light threw a garish illumination over the street.

A policeman approached. When he had come up I said: "Officer, I found this man on my doorstep just now. He rang my bell. He has evidently been drinking, is fairly well dressed and may have money about him. Will you kindly see him away from here?"

The officer nodded and winked, and Dusenberry, dazed but docile, went along with him. He was taken to the police station, but as by that time he had recovered enough of his senses to find the way to his station and thence home, he was allowed to go, no record of the arrest being entered. Both of us slept late next morning. I awoke with a feeling of deep thankfulness and went to the hotel for my watch and money, which I secured only at the cost of a knowing look from the clerk.

Dusenberry awoke to embark in a sea of troubles and misunderstandings. He remembered nothing of what had happened while I occupied his tenement of clay, and to this hour he does not know where he got his cold, or his bruised shins, or his twinge of gout; the papers in a lawsuit gave him an awful shock two days later; but worst of all are the people with subscription books, who came to his house and office at all hours to show him pledges made in his writing, and demand money. Shall he confess that he was drunk and try to beg off from payment, thereby injuring his social and business standing, or shall he give up the sovereign, and further postpone that day when he shall be rich? I do not know. It seems to me that he has been punished enough, and perhaps I owe him a little conscience money. But, at all events, he has shown that the transmigration of identity is fatally possible.

C. S. MONTGOMERY.

## POST-CARD COMPETITION.

### No. 21.

£1 ls. to sender of first correct attempt from any place within 100 miles of London; £1 ls. to sender of first correct attempt from any place beyond 100 miles from London. *Post-cards only, please.* This number of *Short Stories* contains a miscalculation by a character in one of the stories. Where is it? and what is the correct total?

.....

## RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

### No. 19.

LONDON guinea: W. H. Tuz, 17, Chester Road, South Highgate, N.W. Provincial guinea: Chas. A. Phillips, Penryn Road, Colwyn Bay, North Wales



## Or, THE ROMANCE OF A LOST CONTINENT.

By GEO. C. WALLIS, Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," etc.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### THE BURNING OF MIROFIS.

NAYRAHN sat alone in the tent, gloomily drinking, and at my rough-and-ready intrusion rose in sullen anger, demanding what brought me to his presence then, and in such manner.

"I came to ask you help me capture this town for the Queen before another sunrise," I made answer.

He looked at me more closely, then, seeing I was not of his command, asked my name.

"Arnon, the son of Didron," I responded boldly.

"The same who was thought to have perished in a burning house in this very town and was afterwards sent as a prisoner on board a slave-ship?" queried the astounded soldier.

"The same," I replied, "come back to take my revenge on the town and its perfidious governor."

"It cannot be done until I get more men," said Nayrahn despondingly. "I have already been repulsed with loss. And also, what authority hast thou, who wert a pirate and an outlaw, to beard me in my den thus?"

"None," I said, "but that of the knowledge that with my aid you may drive out these invaders before the night has passed; and do that with the sanction of the Priests of the Sacred Grotto."

The dark-bearded warrior, prone to vacillation then as since, considered awhile before he decided.

"Out with your plan then, Sir Pirate—if you have one," he ventured at length, "and I'll see what may be done."

"Now art sensible," I observed. "As to my plan, 'tis simply this: that you let me pick out a chosen band of two hundred men and steal quietly into the town—I know its by-ways well—and to hold the rest of your troop in readiness for an attack the moment you see the glare of a burning house, which will be fired near the middle of the town by nightfall. I need no more."

"Shalt have thy desire, then," said the Captain, fired by my confidence at last. "Pick out thy men as soon as is needful, and I will risk the hazard."

I stepped out of the tent at once, and chose my little band from amongst the veterans, not liking the appearance of the young recruits, and after enjoining the necessity for instant action on his part directly I gave the signal, led the way slowly and noiselessly from Nayrahn's camp. When I got my men outside I halted and gave my instructions.

"Follow wherever I may lead without a word or a sound," I said, "and do not draw a sword or bow, or twist a sling until I cry 'Now!' Remember that I am your leader from here, and that these two comrades of mine, Valdo and Atris, are my second officers. Also, that you may know whom you

are serving, learn that my name is Arnon, erstwhile a reckless pirate, once renowned as Phrena the Iron-Fingered."

A faint murmur of surprise and admiration, burst from the men at this, some of them, doubtless, recalling my doings at the Court of King Dulo. At which I was greatly gratified, feeling also, I think, not displeased at the luxury of revelling in my rightful name! However, assuming a stern air, I commanded silence, giving the word to advance without more ado.

It was rapidly growing dusk, and a moonless, cloudy night was setting in, as I led my band towards one of the barricades, but from which I turned off before we reached it into a thick copse of cedar, near which was the great house, under whose sheltering shadow I had rested fifteen years before, blackened and blistered. Here a trio of sentries paced across the garden in which that house stood, trusting to the nearness of the troop camped behind the barricade to prevent the enemy's entrance through that flowery avenue. Vain hope, when "Sunderer" was amongst the enemy's swords!

Creeping stealthily, slowly, up the mossy banks, taking full advantage of every tree and shrub, my two officers and I contrived to spring upon and finish the unsuspecting sentinels without a sound betraying our success. I caught a glimpse of my man's face, as he fell, before I had given him his quietus, and I swear it would have wrinkled the



Nayrahn sat alone in his tent.

face of an owl with laughter to have seen the consternation pictured on it! Our way thus made easy, we passed through the still, shadowy garden as though we ourselves were but shadows, noiseless, ethereal, like the rest, instead of grim visaged warriors armed to the teeth, and held on till we were fairly inside the enemy's lines.

Now I gave the word to go forward boldly, with studied unconcern, and thus we marched through the streets, none taking alarm at our appearance, plainly taking us for a troop of their own men, indistinct as all objects were fast becoming in the gathering gloom.

I made straight for the governor's house, where I supposed Sothi would be holding his headquarters, and commanded my men to surround it quietly, to rush to the attack immediately they heard the signal-cry of "Now!" and to fire the house when compelled to retreat, but not until. This manoeuvre was accomplished successfully, though a few loitering servants saw us with alarm, and made the building all astir with confusion by the time my men were all in place. My own station was directly facing the great central door, which was all hung with flowering climbers, sweet-scented, and flanked by giant statues of dead kings and noted heroes. Out from this portal, with a very puzzled look, came an over-fed, round-bodied, gaily-bedizened guard grasping a long spear—more ornamental than deadly—in his sleek, fat hands, peering about him as though to ascertain the reason of the sudden disturbance.

"Ha!" thought I, "an you want to know what's towards, my friend, shalt have thy want attended to!" and putting my hand to my mouth, sailor-fashion, I roared "Now!" with all the strength of my lungs. So affrighted was that pampered minion that he dropped his spear, and started back to run as fast as his bulky legs could carry him into the house, bellowing loudly as he ran that the enemy were at his heels. I could have laughed at the sight till my sides ached, but my men were now pressing in on all quarters, and the clash of arms rose deafening on the air, no time being left for mirth to have its sway, so I quickly fitted a bullet to my sling, whirled it round my head in a hissing circle, and stayed his noisiness for ever before he had gone many paces.

Then I rushed at the great door, which was slightly barred, and, helped by two-score of my band, forced it open and strode into the house, where chaos ruled supreme. The inmates for the most part had but just risen from the feast-table, and met us feebly with hastily-seized weapons. The soldiers within, scarcely fifty in number, fought as well as in them lay, disputing our passage from room to room, and terrified women, screaming and weeping, with hair dishevelled and robes flying, ran hither and thither to escape the fray.

"Spare the women!" I cried to my followers, "but slay all the men without mercy, and be speedy with it!"

So, indeed, they were, for, taken by surprise and overwhelmed, and appalled at the penetrating swiftness of my sword as I followed them from chamber to chamber without a pause, the fight soon came to an end by the death of all the resisting defenders. But, to my intense disgust, I saw no sign of Sothi, whom I had come specially to seek.

The street outside and the space surrounding the house was by this time filled with soldiery drawn from the barricades, and our position was becoming one of imminent danger, yet, bidding my men hold ground for a little longer, I flew from room to room, searching among the slain and in every corner and every secret recess I could discover to see if Sothi were indeed within, but all to no purpose. Then, raging bitterly at my ill-luck, I gave the word to retreat and to fire the house in so doing—the inmates left alive having taken flight—and to make for the harbour at once.

Into the dense mass of foes we charged, collecting together and issuing from the main entrance, cutting our way through them, flushed as we were with success, and nonplussed as they were with our boldness, with greater

ease than might have been expected, and, once free of the great press, we hastened down a street that led to the sea, hotly pursued. Now, as we ran, we heard a crackling noise, saw a bright, glare light up the murky sky, and noticed a sudden murmuring behind us.

The pursuers stopped, then turned back, and presently, above the roar of the fire and the shouts of dismay, heard the sound of fighting all along the landward verge of the town, mingled with the battle-cry of the Queen's troops, and we knew that Nayrahn had kept his word and advanced to the attack.

Relieved of immediate danger, we went on with greater caution, and soon I led my little band out upon the almost deserted stone-faced quay, near which lay the eighty vessels of the rebel fleet. Already their crews were preparing to bring up anchors ready for any emergency, when we came to where one lay with its bow touching the stone work.

"Into it, men, and fire it!" I cried, leaping on the deck as I spoke. "Drive these varlets overboard, fire the rebel craft, and cut her anchor chains, and then leap back again. Tide and wind will do the rest, and we'll clear the shore of this traitor squadron in the porting of a helm."

But that crew were a tougher sinewed set of fellows than we bargained for, so that our task was not at all an easy one, and had not some of my men managed to cut their way down between decks, and loosen the rowers from their seats and bring them up to help us, I fear it would have gone ill with us at last. Thus aided, however, we achieved our object, and having set the great, two-hundred oared ship aflame in a score of places, scrambled back on the wharf, followed by the unfettered slaves, and, severing her cables, let her drift with the flowing tide in upon the vessels betwixt her and the shore.

These became at once all hurry and confusion, when that most dreaded neighbour of the seas swept down upon them slowly—a fire-ship flaming furiously, with not a soul on board. They made all press of sail and cut or slipped their cables clumsily in haste to escape from close proximity to their unwelcome consort, and, to my delight, as the last ship cleared out in safety, the wind, freshening from the north, caught the burning vessel, and, fanning the flames into greater intensity, sent her out again from the land in hot pursuit of the flying fleet.

Every vessel was now under weigh, so great was the terror inspired by the dreaded barque as she bore towards them, her spars banging heavily in the breeze, the water curling up under her prow, the flames bursting out from her bows and splitting the deck and side-timbers with short, sharp, whip-like cracks, and lighting up the seventy and nine sail as they stood out to sea, crowding together and sinking one another in their mad haste to avoid the vicinity of the craft blazing away so weirdly over the dark water and mingling the lurid reflection of her fires with the sky-glare from the burning house in the town behind her. It was a grand sight, and I smiled a wolfish smile as I stood and watched the enemy routed by a single ship.

I led the way back into the town, pushing headlong through the crowds of terror-stricken townsfolk who had come down to the water's edge, and so into the thick of the fight that was being waged in the middle of the town, where our own men had now reached.

The fire from the governor's house had meanwhile spread to others, and round the blazing area the contest was being fought with unabating zeal.

Into the enemy's rear we charged then, "Sunderer" piercing its way as though it were intoxicated with the gore it drank and spilled and the spirits it let loose to wing their way to the Shadows; and, small as was our force, the diversion was enough to turn the battle tide, and change the rebel confusion to a hopeless rout.

Up narrow streets and gloomy by-ways, down festering lanes where offal lay in sickly heaps beside the doors, in and out of this house and that, right to the water's brink, and out upon the wharf and back again into the town, and

thence to the barricades, now thrown down in parts, we drove the defeated foes with relentless slaughter, giving no quarter, taking no prisoners, letting none escape, and making the gutters of that bibulous town run red with a liquid that is redder and dearer than wine.

Then, paying no heed to Nayrahn's orders to spare the town, I commanded all who were within hearing distance to fire every house and building that would burn, and then strike out of the maze of masonry into the suburbs. In vain the Captain strove to stay the progress of the conflagration when once started, for the wind was still rising, and, fanned into fury by it, the flames spread with marvellous rapidity, leaping streets and open spaces in their heedless advance, roaring awfully from the windows of doomed dwellings, and licking up the timber and the dry tropical shrubs in the gardens with their long serpent-like tongues in the passing of a thought. Soon the evacuation of the town became compulsory, and out upon the plain—and among the canebreaks—now trampled into worthlessness—a motley multitude of houseless, homeless men and women and children poured, fleeing in breathless haste from the falling fragments of their town.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the fire, soaring skyward in a myriad tapering, tossing spires of lurid red, as though 'twould scale the very heavens and set the clouds ablazing. Louder and louder roared, and hissed the blaze, as street after street was caught and consumed in its hot embrace. Often and more often charred buildings, crashing, fell, as one by one or score by score, shrivelled, burnt out, they collapsed into indistinguishable ruin, and showers of sparks shot up to show the place where they had been.

I stood with my two officers and Nayrahn, the Captain, on a little knoll, watching the awful scene in all its indescribable grandeur, and thinking exultingly how I had escaped from the clutches of the same devouring element so many years ago.

"I would not have destroyed the town," said Nayrahn gloomily, "but as you gave the command, on you shall rest the blame or praise when I make report to the Queen."

"So be it," I said, "I wish no fairer judgment." For now I know from Unim that Briseis was no party to the

treachery that I had so long held her guilty for, though I could not see how else my name had leaked out, I felt the old love and the old self-confidence in her affection return with ten-fold force. I saw now, clearly as though a veil had been drawn from before my eyes, that I had never loved Viol, or Vesta, or the Princess Listra with the same deep, true, lasting love that I felt for my Briseis, who was now my Queen. But you wander from the straight path of your narrative, Arnon!

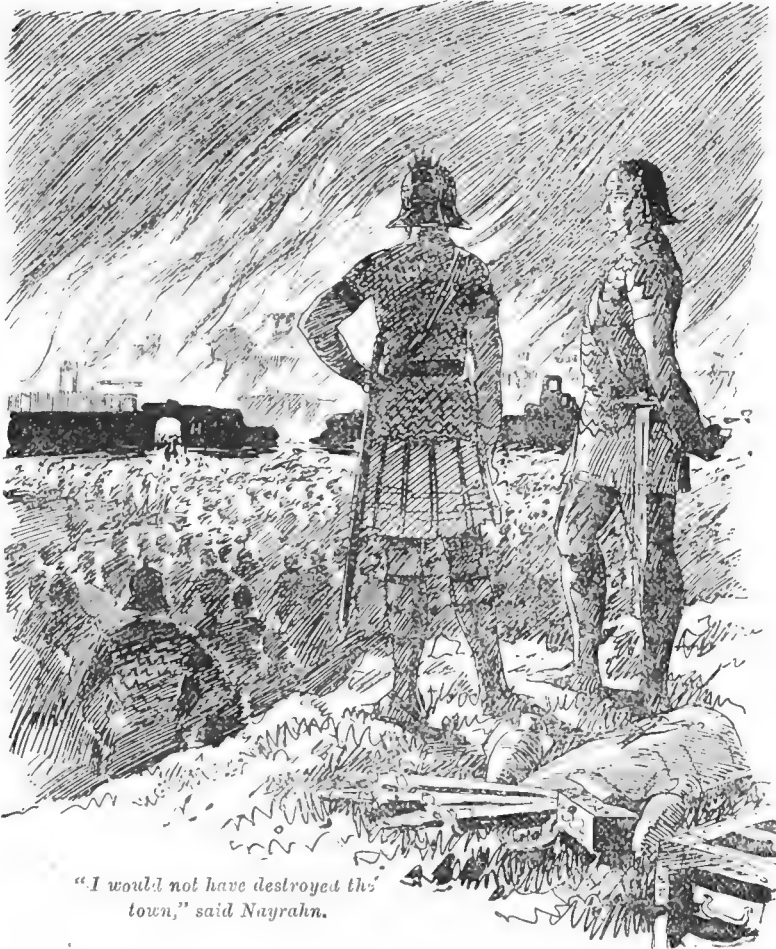
Towards the dawn the fire had near spent itself, only a sudden blaze here and there, the orange glow of smouldering beams, and the duller colour of heated stone and brickwork,

giving evidence that it still existed; and when the morning sun arose in its brilliancy, dispersing the cloud and smoke rack that lingered overhead, it shone slanting upon a great blackened expanse of smouldering, hissing ruins, with scarce a building standing whole in that which but the day before had been a thriving town, well filled with a busy populace. Our victory was, indeed, complete; the enemy had been annihilated almost to a man, and the seaboard towns that might be tempted to go over to the rebels had been given a salutary warning.

Out in the offing, as soon as the light became strong enough, we made out the sixty sail flying the rebel flag—all that remained of their four score—evidently waiting to take off any survivors who might wish to leave Atlantis. Hoisting a

white flag as a token of truce, we allowed them to do this, Nayrahn saying, to my entire satisfaction, that the fewer of the treacherous citizens we kept on shore the better. Some four or five thousand were embarked, and the fleet started westward immediately, whilst we, as soon as the noonday heat had passed its hottest point, set off towards Kronos, many of the soldiers loaded heavily with the loot they had obtained in the brief fight. Valdo and Atris and I were encumbered enough with the gold we carried, it is true, but we could ride with ease compared with the discomfort and awkwardness of some of the greedy troopers.

As we drew near to Kronos, traversing much the same ground that I had once crawled over, a burnt and blistered fugitive, I saw with grief the ravages that the great army



"I would not have destroyed the town," said Nayrahn.

had made on the surrounding fertile lands for its own support. Vast tracts of maize and wheat, that ought then to have been waving in yellow billows 'neath a ripening sun, lay gaunt and bare, or covered with short stubble, the precious grain having been cut and taken before it was fairly come to maturity. The aloes and the ceiba trees were stripped of their fruit for leagues, and the country-folk wandered, disconsolate, about their empty villages and lands or sat moodily by their doorstones, scowling evilly on us as we passed or muttering curses on all who bore arms.

Gods! it wrung my heart to see the misery on some of their faces as our men rode by, well-fed, with ribald jests and coarse laughter and brutish jeers at the cravens who stayed at home instead of seeking glory on the field; to see the wasted forms of the women who had denied themselves for the sake of their little babes—and oft in vain, as was testified by the sad processions that at intervals crossed our path, bearing tiny biers to the village burying-grounds.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### "QUEEN BRISEIS COMES!"

FAR and wide over the landscape stretched the mighty host, the thousands of its tents whitening the ground as though that tropic region had received a heavy fall of northern snow; the glittering of the thousand weapons of its sentinels reflecting the rays of the morning sun in line after line around the great circumference of the encampment; the armour of the officers and horsemen glinting fitfully as they rode to and fro in the streets of that city of soldiers; the heavy fodder and lighter commissariat wagons lumbering and rattling along the canvas-sided avenues or discharging their loads in the several market-places set up in that white wilderness; and the confused murmur of its many voices hanging over it all like the sound of a busy town.

Southward the camp reached to the villas and gardens of Kronos, eastward to the sea line, northward to the three great burial pyramids, unequalled in size save by the mighty monuments I have seen in the Land of Khem, and to the westward to where we sat in our saddles, looking upon the animated scene. Nearly two hundred thousand men were there congregated—a vast and seething flood of human energy, held in bounds, but ready to overflow or burst its banks and rush with devastating impetus wherever it might be needed, a very deluge of war and death.

"Let the rebels land, with all the men they can muster," said I to my couple of worthies; "let them land, and I will wager but little on their chances against this brave array!"

As we rode into the camp and down the widest of its myriad wide streets, I observed that it was all astir with excitement, as though some startling news were passing from lip to lip, and all was bustle and gossip, even the tawdry-dressed and bedizened camp followers taking unwonted interest in the words that fell from their temporary swains as they drank their morning allowance. Scores of messengers were afoot, rushing from tent to tent with wonderful alacrity, and stopping one of these by neatly throwing my loosened bow-string over his head—to his great surprise and indignation—I inquired what was in the wind that everyone must know about so urgently. After fulminating for a while at my rough and ready mode of detention, he choked down his cholera and proceeded to enlighten my darkness.

News had that morning arrived, he said, that the Prince of Aïd had returned to his province, collected its soldiers, and thrown in his lot with the rebels. The Princess and her subjects had rallied to his side with marvellous unanimity when his object became known, and he had unfurled the rebel flag over the palace of Thine. Also Nayrahn had brought tidings of the fall of Miropis, and the scattering of the fleet that lay there. Also the Sleeper, who had slept in the sacred Grotto near Miropis, had been awakened by one Arnon, who had been a pirate, the son of the noted Didron, erst known as Phrena the Iron-Fingered,

who had likewise played a brave part in the defeat of the renegade Sothi; and more than that, the Sleeper, who gave out his name to be Marenso, had appeared in the encampment but three hours ago, accompanied by two priests, and had gone thence to the Royal Palace in Kronos.

"Small wonder, then," concluded my informant, "that excitement reigns and all minds are unsettled, for the prophecy that was foretold of Marenso, who has slept a thousand years, is in all men's mouths, some fearing thereof and all greatly amazed."

"Small wonder, indeed," said I, "that such a budget of ill and good news together should cause a passing turmoil. But canst tell me the nearest way to the Palace? For I have a message that will startle thee, I think, when I say that I am the Arnon of whom you have spoken, who captured Miropis and awoke the Sleeper, and I would fain see the Queen."

Rendered almost speechless with surprise, the messenger pointed me out the way, and then ran with fleetest feet than before to spread the added item of news that I had given him.

"Now you know my name and fame, will you still go with me or mingle in this throng?" I asked my comrades, wishing to test them once more.

"We go with you wherever you wish," said Atris.

"We follow your fortunes through bright days or dark ones, in war or peace, and like you all the better for knowing who you are," said Valdo, "for we heard the story of Didron and his son years ago."

"Then come with me to the Palace," I said, assured now of their lasting fidelity, "and before many weeks have passed, if I mistake not, we shall all three be in high position, either in the army or the fleet."

So we threaded our way along the avenues of the camp, now nearly in an uproar with the morning's strange intelligence, passed into the city streets, making our way with difficulty through the thronging crowds of people, scarcely less agitated by the flying rumours than the soldiery, and gaining the Palace grounds, pushed ourselves unceremoniously amongst the crush of courtiers who aired their finery and simpering gracefulness for the benefit of the ladies engaged in similar posturings, and at last, dismounting, stood within the great hall that leads to the audience chamber of the Sovereigns of Atlantis.

Further we could not penetrate for some time, so great was the press of nobles and functionaries, but by dint of lusty elbowing and shouldering, and taking advantage of every inward rush, we won through with linked hands into the audience room itself and stood amid the throng before, the famous Silver Throne, which was polished as a mirror and all inlaid with intertwining patterns of smooth rose-coloured granite, worked in so dexterously as to seem but one united whole. Its richly cushioned seat was vacant when we entered, and all eyes were directed towards the heavy hangings beyond it, where the Queen would presently appear.

Whilst we waited thus, expectant of her coming, I felt more fearful, more nervous, than I had ever felt before, even in direst danger. My heart throbbed violently against my side, my knees trembled, and the flesh stood up in chilly pimples on my body—strange symptoms, truly, in one so little used to indulge in weak emotion. Not strange, though, when all the causes are taken into account, for surely 'tis not often man stands face to face with a climax like that I felt approaching, when the drapery behind the throne awayed slightly, as with someone shifting it aside.

At that moment the great chamber, with its costly tapestries worked in with the history of our rulers, the swaying sea of human faces, with eyes upturned and necks strained to catch the first glimpse of their sovereign; the throne itself and the purple curtain, all seemed to swim in a misty haze, and then to vanish from my senses. Instead, out of the blackness that succeeded, grew a snow-white cloud, that, as in thought I gazed, took shape and lessened

and drew nearer, and as it came, stretched out two arms towards me in loving greeting. I looked again, and it seemed as though the cloud had changed to a female form I knew too well, and, glancing upwards at the face, I saw that it was the face of Briseis, my long lost love, crowned with

when she had walked beside me on its blossom-bordered paths, the mistress of that dear domain, still as thoughtful in her winsome glance as then, and still as lovely in my sight as ever, but cares of state and private worries, and, perchance, a pining for my long absence, had not passed by without leaving their marks upon her in the thinner cheek, the more unresting eye, the sharper word; yet all this rather endeared me the more than broke the charm, for the beauty that survives the years, that outlives and defies life's ills and sorrows, the beauty that beams the brighter for all the trouble-tests that would destroy another's charms, is ever the best and purest loveliness that earth can show.

Thinking thus, as I gazed my fill on the Queen that I, a wandering adventurer, dared to covet for my own, I felt the old sweet longing stealing unresisted through my mind.

Unable to bear the strain without a word, I pushed to the front and stood at the foot of the three oaken steps that lead to the Throne-seat, and, standing there, raised my eyes unflinchingly to the lady who sat upon it, clad in her royal vestments. She looked at me then, who came forward so roughly and so disdainful of Court etiquette, and amid the angry murmurs of those around who waited for a hearing, our eyes met, and all travel and war marked as I was, and changed from fiery youth to graver manhood, she knew me in an instant, and heedless of the cynosure of those thousand eyes, gave me her hand to kiss, and whispered to me, soft and low, her voice thrilling on the chords of memory with sweet reminiscence:

"Art returned at last, thou wanderer! But know this for thy comfort and greeting, that though I have awaited thee so long, my patience is not yet gone."

"My Queen," I murmured faintly, "those are the sweetest words that I have listened to since last I saw thee!"

"Now rise," said Briseis, in the same low tone, "it is not meet for us to consummate our reunion here, for cares of State are heavy and pressing;" then, in a louder voice, that rang with truly regal hauteur, she went on: "Thy petition, O Arnon, is granted, and henceforth thou art one of my trusted officers. Now stand thee on my right hand, and thou, usher, bring in the Sleeper who has wakened from his rest of a thousand years."

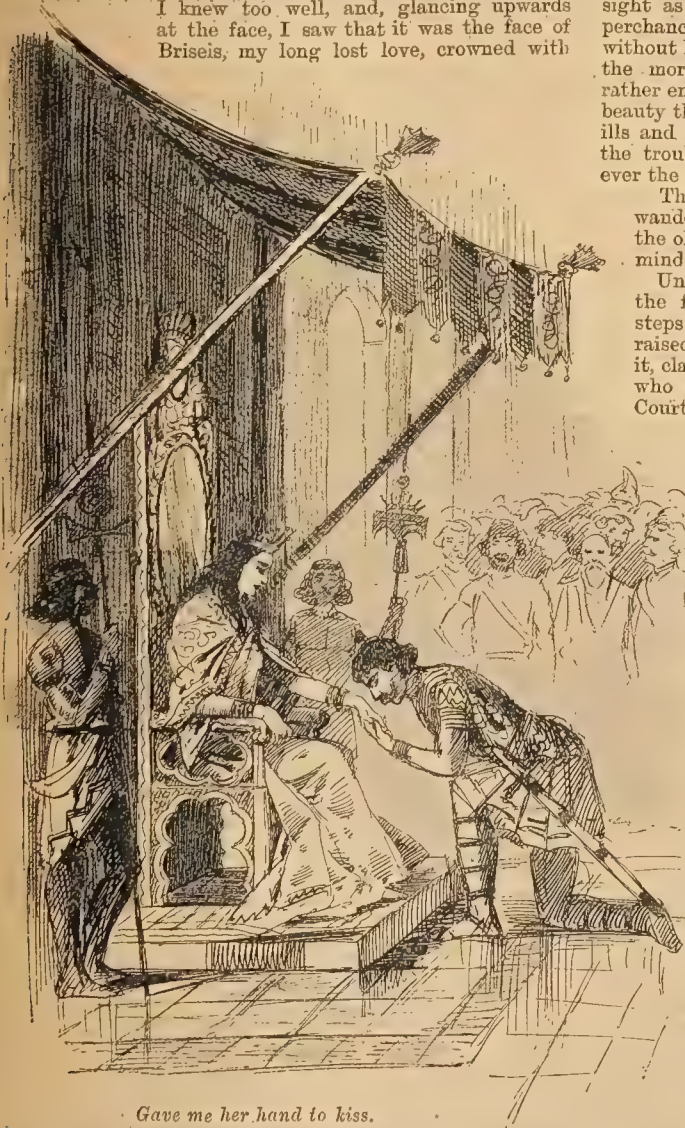
The command was instantly obeyed, and the attention of the audience was happily diverted from us to the wondrous Sleeper, who, dressed in his antique garb, was led before the throne by Unim and his fellow-priest. At the Queen's desire Unim related the tradition that had been handed down from generation to generation, and recited the prophecy that was told concerning the waking of Marenso.

His words rang clearly in the deathlike silence that prevailed, and many a face blanched fearfully as the saying of dread import sounded in their ears:

"For whoso wakes the Sleeper shall bury him, dead truly, in the Sacred Grotto, and whosoever shall be king of Atlantis in the day that the Sleeper dies, shall be its last king, and the end of the land itself shall not be far away."

At another time, I, too, should have been impressed with the message of hovering doom; but now I saw nothing but Briseis, sitting there in state, her lovely face unmoved by either joy or sorrow, and heard nothing that I cared about save the music of her voice.

Then Marenso stood forth, looking as a man who had passed through a stern struggle with a great grief, and coming out triumphant, had nevertheless emerged with the marks of the conflict upon him. He confirmed the words of Unim, and proved by describing the land as he had known



Gave me her hand to kiss.

her wealth of raven hair, which, escaping from its fastenings, fell in rich and ample folds upon her shoulders.

A moment I looked on that cloud-born image, speechless in its astral thinness, then it slowly faded away into shapeless nebulosity, while in my ears rang an usher's cry, taken up by a thousand voices all around in the joyful shout:

"Queen Briseis comes!"

The cloud-mist vanished into the dark whence it came, and out of the dark grew in an instant the great chamber in which I stood, its crowded audience, and the silver throne in view of all, not empty now, but occupied by the counterpart of the vision I had just seen with my spirit eyes. 'Twas Briseis' self who sat in that regal seat.

Long I gazed at her before I ventured forward, scanning every detail of the well-remembered form with hungry eyes. She was still as witching-figured as when I first saw her as I lay in her garden, still as queenly in her royal robes as

it and telling what king reigned when he was last awake, that his slumber had lasted a thousand years or more; and adding that it was held in his day, as a message from the gods, that the end of Atlantis would come by water and her people and her greatness alike would be buried beneath the sea.

The faces of his hearers whitened still more as they listened to him, speaking as one who had risen from the dead and was revealing to them the secrets of the Shadow Land, and all hailed with a sigh of relief the appearance of Nayrahn, who recounted the capture of Miropis; and the messenger who brought the tidings of the secession of the Province of Aidè. Then, to my immense satisfaction, the Queen intimated that the audience was at an end, and all saving myself, Marenso, Unim and his fellow-priest, Nayrahn, and Valdo and Atris, withdrew from the chamber.

"Now we can talk in peace, my faithful subjects," said Briseis, "now we can consider what measures to take in face of the dangers that are threatening us on every side, undisturbed by a frivolous and fearful crowd of sycophants. And first I would know how we are to proceed against the rebels in our motherland?"

"Since you ask, my Sovereign," said Marenso, "I would advise that you send the half of yonder vast array to reconquer the recalcitrant province where rebellion has uplifted its evil head; and that it be done speedily, before the foreign traitors can pour their forces into it."

"This good counsel, Sleeper," said the Queen, "and showest that thou hast soon busied thyself with the affairs of this age. But which of my generals can I best trust for this immediate and important task? I have none, well tried, such as Quitzaal has in his army."

"If you need a man who may be trusted and has lived in the service of arms," cried Marenso eagerly, "you might do worse, O Queen, than appoint me the leader of this expedition. Trust me, and I shall not fail!"

"What wast thou, Marenso, when last thou wast awake?"

"I was King Montezza's general-in-chief," replied the soldier, "and so established his throne that no enemy dared lift his head in our dominions for seven years before I fell asleep."

"Is it your wish, my councillors—for such henceforth you seven shall be—that I make Marenso my general?"

"It is," we answered, though Nayrahn did so doubtfully, as was his wont, agreeing that the sooner the troops were set in motion the better, lest they should succumb to a universal panic.

"And 'twill be something to divert my thoughts," said the Sleeper, bowing low as the favour was bestowed upon him, "for all things are strange to me here, and the sudden loss of friends and relatives and everything I cherished is still bitter upon me."

I pitied him, then; for an awful thing it must be to awake from slumber to find the darkness of a thousand years fallen down between oneself and all familiar forms and places.

"And also," continued Queen Briseis, "I need a captain for my fleet, to lead it out to meet and conquer the great company of ships that Vichri is reported to be bringing to the attack of Kronos."

"For that service there are few so well fitted as Arnon the Pirate," said I, "who loves the sea as his childhood's home, and glories above all things in the sailing of a ship!"

"'Tis thy old fault, Arnon," smiled my royal mistress, "to know thy own merits so well and so witlessly to noise thy knowledge abroad! Natheless thou hast the duty thou cravest."

This time I bowed low in token of thanksgiving for the honour thus laid upon me, and Briseis went on:

"As to you, my priests, do you strive to quell the fright that has come upon the people because of the prophecy. It were ill for them to grieve before the evil falls, and though the sea is rising ever, Kronos and Miropis are still untouched by its advance, and the worst may be long in coming. Go, then, and do my bidding, and a royal present shall be forthcoming to enrich your Sacred Grotto."

"We go, and willingly," said Unim, "for of a truth your Majesty speaks as one inspired of the Spirits," and they departed.

"And thou, Nayrahn, I appoint the Captain of my Guard, for art a brave, if a careful soldier."

Together with Marenso, after making due obeisance, the officer withdrew, followed by Valdo and Atris, whom I motioned to await me outside the palace precincts. Alone I lingered by the throne, fidgeting nervously with the hilt of my sword, seeming unable to break the spell of the silence of that empty room.

"Why stayest thou, Arnon?" asked the Queen.

"Why?" I said, the sound re-echoing round the vaulted hall. "Why? Because, my Queen, whom once I called my love, because—because—forsooth, I cannot go."

"I knew it, my Arnon," said she, "and have waited with scant patience to rid me of these pestered courtiers and councillors, that we may talk alone for a moment. Say, hast never forgotten me in all these years?"

"But once, my Briseis," I answered, "in a way that I will tell thee if thou wishest, although, till a few months ago, I thought 'twas thou betrayed me into exile, using Sothi as an instrument."

"That is what I ever feared," returned my love, "and but that the traitor Sothi stood high in favour with King Dulo, and latterly with his regiment, I had punished him for his evil-doing. Some time I will tell thee the foul story, and thou shalt tell me the tale of thy wanderings, and how thou didst come to forget me even once; but it is not seemly that we stay longer here together, for subjects will talk, and a queen must have regard for their gossip though she despise it in her heart."

"'Tis true," I answered, "and I go, if you will grant me but a lover's kiss to seal the re-uniting of our lives."

"Shouldst have thy boon, my long-lost one," said the Queen, looking at me as though half afraid I meant to take it by violence, "shouldst have thy desire were I as I once was; but slaves and spies are ever round a sovereign's throne, and who knows what eyes may not be on us even now? Nay, who knows what ears have heard our talk already? 'Twere not safe for thee to stay a moment longer. Yet stay"—as I turned to go with a leaden heart—"where art going to lodge thyself and thy followers?"

"I know not, nor care," I said gloomily.

"Then obey thy Queen," said Briseis, looking at me with the old light in her lustrous eyes again, "and take thy quarters in the house where I lived when I first saw thee—thou know'st it, dost thou not, Arnon?—and make it thy home till such time as fortune may favour thee with a change. Thou mayst be wandering in the garden some even—who shall say?—and maybe I visit that same tree-shaded nook at intervals to gain an hour of solitude. There, take what comfort thou canst from that, my Arnon, and put not my good repute in jeopardy by lingering more."

Thus reassured, I turned and went, though slowly, and often looking back before I reached the door. Passing out as the usher re-entered with a score of female waiting slaves, I strode off rapidly to seek my inseparable worthies. They found, I directed my course without delay to the house I remembered so well, near the western outskirts of the city, and took up my abode in its luxurious interior, together with Valdo and Atris, who never tired of commending themselves on their great good luck in being attached to so favoured a patron, and of being waited on with such ceaseless, tireless zeal by the retinue of obsequious slaves that the great establishment maintained, and whom we endeared to our service by a profuse outpouring of golden largess on the first day of our residence there.

Full often the place was thronged with guests and officers of State and many sea captains, till I was nigh distraught with divided attentions and constant banqueting and long confabulations; for none could discuss the least matter of national import unless their paunches and

tongues were well lubricated with plenteous repasts and copious bumpers of hill-side wine.

I was soon heartily disgusted with them all, save the sea captains. Those I favoured above all the others, seeming to hear the song of the sea in their rough and rollicking talk and spicy yarns that smacked full strong of the briny wave! With them I grew a favourite, as with most others I met, for was I not rich and great and patronised by Royalty, and singled out by the Spirits as their Instrument of Fate?

Yet I would gladly have foregone all this cringing subservience and flattering attention, all this pomp, and glitter, and show, and tinsel, and gaud, for the life that I lived a few short months with Briseis in the years gone by.

It was with unconcealed joy that I escaped from it an hour or two each day to visit the army on the plain, assist in the preparation of Marenso's force for departure, and, finally, to see him start north-westward with his battalions in brave array; or to go down to the Bay of Kronos, to supervise the manning and victualling of the huge fleet of five hundred sail waiting there for news of the enemy's movements.

One thing I discovered on these latter visits that gladdened my heart next to the sight of the Queen was that tight old ship, the *Ravager*, that had carried me in triumph over many a league of tossing, heaving billows, whereon my youthful hands first learned to steer, to warp, to heave to, to slip cable, and hoist sail; whereon I fought 'neath lusty Didron, rough-hearted but true, and whereon I slew cantankerous Zerah for slighting my golden-haired, sunny-tempered Viol.

There she lay by the wharf, that tough old ship, her long, low hull dwarfed by comparison with the great warships around her, but herself more than a match for any of them, I stoutly avowed.

Remembering the swiftness of my lost *Seamew* and the rig of her Egyptian sail, I had like spars and canvas, though heavier and larger, put on my veteran ship, adding to the prow a sharp iron beak like that I had noticed on Strong-Arm Thaska's vessel, also increasing the number of rowers by fifty; and now I had a craft that I dared against the fleetest in the bay for a ten-league spin—the stake a bar of gold, for I had now fetched all the treasure from my cave and lodged at my home—and, though ill-served by tide and breeze, the good old *Ravager* outpaced them all with many a length to spare, from that time till now remaining my flagship, the most famous vessel that has ever ploughed the deep Atlantic seas.

Atris and Valdo were numbered amongst her crew of two hundred sturdy sailors, all picked men, and 'twas my greatest joy to tread her deck and make short voyages along the coast to try her speed and toughness.

Many days passed thus busily, and often I wandered in that fair garden, waiting for my love, listening to the birds' sweet carillons, the tinkling of the little rills, and the plashing of the fountains; revelling in the rich odours exhaled by its myriad vari-coloured flowers, and oft reclining silently upon its mossy banks, or sitting on the rude timber seat beneath that well-known leafy grove through which at night the moonbeams stole; yet for weeks she for whom I waited came not.

Then tidings reached us by couriers from the north of the great success of Marenso and the utter rout of the Prince of Aidè's force, which, the messengers said, had been driven after many losses to take refuge in the mountains once infested by robbers, and was there beleaguered by the loyal hosts.

Many of the rebels had deserted to our standard, but the chief nobles and their two leaders were with the remnant in the hills. All accounts spoke highly of the military genius and popularity of the awakened Sleeper, who seemed as one come down from another world to aid Atlantis in her need.

Also news was brought by a swift-sailing merchant vessel that at last the rebel fleet was fairly under weigh, and making for our southern shores, the captain of the ship

having seen the great flotilla not many days' voyage beyond Miropis, moving slowly as though weighted down by a full complement of soldiery and stores.

Directly I received this information I proceeded to hasten the preparation of the fleet for taking the sea, and the following day saw everything in readiness for the start. But there is one thing I ought to relate here, that happened before these tidings arrived.

It was one forenoon, when the city was given over to rejoicing at the victories of Marenso, that I observed Atris, alone amongst the merry-makers, wearing a most woeful countenance, and hanging about me as though wishing to say something, but scarcely daring to. At last I grew tired of his hesitancy, and asked him to out with it and let me know what troubled him.

"Thou'rt ever favoured by beauty's smiles," said he mysteriously, "and even the Queen, if I mistake not, looked on thee with love when we stood by."

"Tis not of myself you wish to speak," I said impatiently, "'tis of thy own affairs, I warrant. Come, man, say what ails thee or what boon thou cravest, and not go round and round the subject like a love-sick maid!"

"Though 'tis not thyself I wish to speak of, thou hast greatly to do with my desire," answered Atris, finding his tongue more readily now. "There was a maiden whom thou didst save from a bullying soldier on the road between here and Miropis. Dost remember?"

"I do," I said, starting, for the affair had slipped my memory.

"And didst thou not promise her to put the matter before the Queen, lest a similar evil should befall her?"

"So I did," I answered, self-condemned.

"And hast forgotten thy promise, and is that lovely maid to be left whatever fate may pass her way these troublesome war times?"

"Thou art right, my Atris," I made reply, "for, truth to tell, I had let the matter slip my mind, so pestered are we with these crowds of hollow-hearted hangers-on at Court. I'll see the Queen this very day and ask her royal permission to send for the maiden and her father to the city, out of harm's way."

"But will the maiden be safer here, think'st thou, than under her father's humble roof?"

"Why, art much concerned regarding this maid, I vow!" I laughed boisterously. "Hast fallen in love with her pretty face?"

"In faith, I think I have," he answered, so solemnly that I roared again.

"Then shalt have my aid," I said, clapping him on the shoulder, "for of all afflictions thou has been seized with the worst. I say it knowingly."

"Yet seem in no haste to cast off thy own fair share of the affliction," returned he, smiling in his turn.

So, in my official character, I asked my boon of Briseis, which she graciously granted, saying that if I feared for the maid's safety she would take her as her own especial waiting-girl, thus keeping her within watch, "for thy follower is a brave man, I hear," she said, "and well deserve some recompense for his devotion to thee."

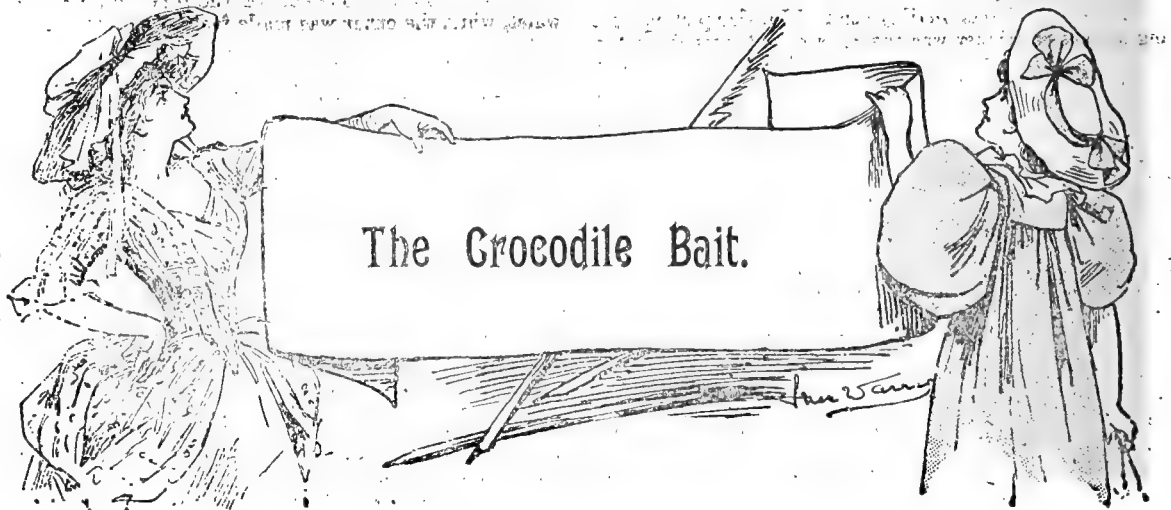
Hugely delighted, Atris at once brought them to Kronos, and placing Izitla with the Queen, as desired, installed her father in our palatial house, where we heaped every kind attention possible upon him, and almost caused a youthful glow to faintly tinge his aged cheeks.

Only Valdo, sternly practical, and ever with face set against women and their wiles, shook his head, saying 'twas a thousand pities that Atris had ever seen the winsome maid.

"For me," he grumbled, "I shall go through as I have managed till now, with a keen and trusty sword as my only companion; and one, moreover, that never plays you false, nor leads you into reckless, foolish, ape-brained schemes."

That was his philosophy; as for Atris and myself, we only laughed at him and said we'd take the risk.

(To be continued.)



"WHAT, my boy there? He is a pure-blooded East Indian, aren't you, Decoy? You see, sir, he speaks pigeon-English tolerably well, though. That is because I brought him up from a baby. Why did I give him such a peculiar name? Thereby hangs a tale. While you're sitting here under the awning on deck, I'll spin you the yarn.

"Calcutta is much improved since my young days. Then there was hardly any steam navigation. The big East Indianmen came to anchor at Kedgerie, thirty miles down, and sent freight and passengers up in lighters.

"I had never been up country any distance. So as the rice wasn't coming in very fast, I made arrangements for a little jaunt up the Hooghly after pea-fowl. I hired a native boat-owner, who spoke fairly good pigeon-English, to take me some fifty miles up river.

"The boat had a roofing over the stern to keep off the sun, and I enjoyed the day part of the trip very well; but what with the stifling air and mosquitoes, at night it was almost intolerable. So after we got as far up as Bramapore—a small native village on the left bank of the Ganges—I paid off the boat owner and his men. Then, taking up my gun and a few traps I had brought along, I went ashore to the only thing like a house of entertainment the village afforded. It was a low structure, with thatched roof and mud walls, divided up into perhaps a dozen sleeping rooms, the size of a closet.

"I hired a native to sit by my canvas cot all night, and keep a big palm-leaf fan going. Sleep? Well, there wasn't much for either of us. Big lizards, singing out 'ghek-hoe' as plain as I can say it, chased beetles and mice in the cloth ceiling overhead all night long. I could hear big toads 'flop' along the floor every moment. Mosquitoes sang inside, and outside the bullfrogs kept up a roaring chorus—jackals and owls joined in.

"Next day another man landed from a native boat and hired one of the rooms. He was an East Indian, rather well educated, and spoke English with fluency.

"I soon discovered that he was an agent for the Zoological Society in London. His business was employing natives to catch for him different birds and animals. These he sent to a Calcutta agent in a big lighter which he had chartered. The tiger cats in the yard I soon found belonged to Nana—the only name I knew him by. And the same day a boa-constrictor was captured in the reeds by the river, and was boxed up and put aboard the lighter.

"Of course I was greatly interested in what he had to tell me of his various adventures. He had assisted in the capture of elephants in Ceylon, lions in South Africa, and had taken tigers in the jungle pitfalls.

"'What I look for, Sahib,' he said, as we were talking together the morning after he came, 'is the big crocodile that has slain more men of Bramapore than I can count upon the fingers of both hands.'

"'To capture him?' I asked, in surprise, for I supposed that only the young or half-grown monsters were taken for the purposes Nana represented.

"'The Sahib has said it,' was the cool reply. 'Nana has man who throw the noose with skill; I hope by tomorrow to lure the crocodile far enough from the rushes so that we can overpower it.'

"'But how?' I questioned again.

"Now, at the best, Nana hadn't a very prepossessing face. His features were regular enough, and he was no darker than a Brazilian as to the colour of his skin. But there was something cruel and sinister in his expression. And when I asked the last question, the yellowish centre in the pupils of his eyes expanded and contracted like those of the tiger cats in the cage.

"'I have that my secret,' he said; but I said nothing more.

"Of course, I was curious to find out his secret; but I said nothing, and presently took my gun for my daily tramp.

"How hot it was! Not a breath of air stirring, and the sun pouring down from a cloudless sky. I began thinking that I had been a thousand times better off under the ship's awning, drinking cool *sangaree*, than potting

pea-fowl with the thermometer at 102 degrees in what little shade there was.

"Then, too, it was terribly still. The sharp chirp of a big species of cricket was the only sound excepting the soft gurgle and flow of the muddy Ganges, a few rods distant—till all at once I heard a baby giving tongue most lustily.

"If this had sounded in the direction of the village it would not have seemed anything unusual; but Bramapore was half a mile distant, and the noise proceeded from somewhere near the river, whose parched banks were barren of verdure. A few beds of rushes and a big boulder or two were in sight, and nothing more, till at the edge of the rushes I saw a black baby crawling on its hands and knees as fast as it could, and shrieking like a little demon.

"Well it might! For, all at once, as I hurried forward, I saw the enormous snout of the very biggest Indian crocodile I ever saw before or since, poked up through the rushes a little in the rear of the baby. Before I could pull myself together the monster's shoulders and part of his mud-caked body were clear of the edge. There would be no time to rush forward, grab the little one, and beat a retreat.

"Dropping behind a boulder, I cocked my right-hand barrel, which was loaded with heavy swan-shot. The crocodile in clawing himself upward over a clay hummock exposed for one brief moment the dingy-white patch of flesh behind the foreleg, which, next to the eye itself, is considered the most vulnerable spot. Resting my gun over the boulder, I aimed for this and fired.

"The swan-shot, at such short range, clumped together with deadly effect. The immense reptile uttered a sort of bellow, and heeled over on its side. At the same moment a shout from a jungle patch a few paces away caused me to turn suddenly.

"Nana, followed by half-a-dozen natives carrying small coils of flexible coil rope, came running towards me. Nana's face was distorted with rage, and as he neared me, I saw him snatch his short tulwar, or native sword, from its sheath.

"Of course, there was only one construction to be put upon his action, though for the moment I did not understand what my cause of offence had been.

"Stop, you black scoundrel!' I shouted. But he was as wild as a Malay running amuck. He never paused an instant, despite my levelled gun; and, seeing that in another moment he meant to cut me down, I aimed at his upraised arm and fired.

"Well, the barrel was only loaded with birdshot, but it was quite effectual. Nana dropped his tulwar with a yell of pain, and two or three natives behind him, who were slightly peppered, turned and ran for dear life, followed by their uninjured companions.

"I had aimed hastily, and only about half the charge had struck the East Indian in the fleshy part of the arm. He snatched up his turban and bound it up, cursing me the while in the choicest Hindustanee.

"You brought it on yourself,' I said, as coolly as I could, while I was reloading—for I didn't fancy his fiendish look in the least.

"Nana didn't seem to hear what I said at all.

"Five thousand rupees I have lost by this,' he yelled, pointing with his left hand to the crocodile, which was in the agonies of death. 'Five thousand rupees that I was to have for taking the big man-eater alive!'

"Would you have had him swallow that baby?' I said indignantly, as I turned towards the little one I had nearly forgotten.

"If you believe me, sir, the black child, certainly not over a year old, had one end of the rope round its little waist, while the other was made fast to a dead stub.

"Then I saw it all. This was the brute's secret for decoying the crocodile from his muddy bed! I don't get angry very often, but when I do, I'm mad clear through.

"Get out of this, you copper-skinned hound!' I shouted, throwing up my gun. 'Quick time, too, or I'll put a double charge of shot through your worthless carcass!'

"Well, Nana was wise enough to take the hint without any delay. And he didn't go back to the inn, either. I untied the naked young one, and carried it up to the village. No one pretended to know anything about it. The brute had probably bought the baby for a few rupees of some of the very poorest and most degraded of the natives, and they, of course, would not let themselves be known. The man whom I employed as an interpreter told me very coolly that I mustn't think anything of such little affairs—they were common enough in this part of India. I think he was rather inclined to blame me for spoiling Nana's plans.

"I congratulated myself on having prevented a foul murder, but I could get no thanks for it from anyone—not even from the rescued infant. So, quite disgusted, I packed up, hired another boat, and took the young one back to the ship. My stewardess was a Maharrattah woman, and her husband, my cook, persuaded her to take care of the child.

"We went back, and loaded for Ahangai, the stewardess and her husband staying by us for three round deep-water passages. I got quite fond of Decoy, who grew fat and tough every voyage.

"When he was three years old, he would follow me about like a little dog, and at five he would go up the rigging like a monkey.

"Time went by, and when Decoy was ten I came to Calcutta with him as my cabin-boy in the old *Akbar Castle*. We were ashore for next day's marketing one evening, and Decoy, I noticed, was very uneasy as we started back for the landing-place.

"Sahib Cap'n got him pistol?' he asked, as he came trotting up behind with the great vegetable basket. And I said: 'No. Why?'

"Bad man keep watch, Sahib Cap'n, all time we to market—man one arm no good,' he said.

"We had just got to the upper end of Garden Reach as Decoy said this, and I was making some careless answer when someone ran up behind me with an ugly-looking knife in his left hand.

"Decoy sang out, and, dropping his basket, grabbed the man round both knees, just as I turned in time to dodge the knife blow, which dashed little Decoy quite badly in the shoulder. But he hung on like a trump, and a minute later I had the fellow disarmed and handed over to the native police.

"As you may have supposed, it was Nana, who had managed to recognise me after all those years. And when he appeared before the magistrate next morning when my complaint was entered, you should have seen his face, when it came out in the examination that little Decoy was the black baby he intended as crocodile bait.

"He was sentenced to hard labour for ten years, I think. I hope he got it, too—the hardest kind. Decoy has been with me ever since. Please God, always will be while I live—eh, Decoy?"

# THE ISLE OF LEPEERS.



THERE was an awful beauty on the Gulf of Georgia that summer night. It was as if all the golds and scarlets and purples of the sunset had been pounded to a fine dust and rolled in from the ocean in one great opaline mist.

The colouring of the sky began in the east with a pale green that changed delicately to salmon, and this to rose, and the rose to crimson—and so on down to the west, where the sun was sinking into a gulf of scarlet through which all the fires of Hades seemed to be pouring up their flames and sparks. Long, luminous rays slanted through the mist and withdrew swiftly, like searchlights—having found all the lovely wooded islands around which the burning waves were clasp hands and kissing. The little clouds that had journeyed down to see what was going on in that scarlet gulf must have been successful in their quest, for they were fleeing back with the red badge of knowledge on each breast. Only the snow mountains stood aloof, white, untouched—types of eternal purity.

Through all that superb riot of colour that heralded the storm that was sweeping in from the ocean moved a little boat, with a flapping sail, lazily. In it were a man and a woman. The woman was the wife of the man's best friend.

They had left Vancouver—and all else—behind them in the early primrose dawn. Trying to avoid the courses of steamers they had lost their own, and were drifting. In less than an hour the storm was upon them. All the magnificent colouring had given place to white-edged blacks. Occasionally a scarlet thread of lightning was cast, crinkling along the west. Then in a moment, followed the deep fling and roar of the thunder. Fierce squalls came tearing up the straits where the beautiful mist had trembled.

The little boat went straining and hissing through the sea. As each squall struck her the sail bellied to the water. There was no laughter now, no love-glow, on the faces in that boat; they were white as death, and their eyes were wild. Veins like ropes stood out in the man's throat and arms, and the woman could not speak for the violent beating in her throat. She held on to the tiller with swollen hands and wrenched arms. When the boat sunk into the black hollows she braced herself and looked down into the water, and thought—of many things. And through all his agonised thought for the woman, the man had other more terrible thoughts too.

Straight ahead of them arose the white, chalky shoulder of an island. He realised that he was powerless to avoid it. There was one low place, sloping down, green, to a beach of sand, but the sharp outlines of rocks rose between them—and there was no shelter from the wind. Still, it was their only chance. That or death. (He wished afterwards that it had been death.) He braced himself and pulled at the ropes until spots of blood quivered before his eyes.

"Port!" he yelled. "Port hard!" But the woman gave one gesture of despair; her hands fell from the tiller and she sank in a heap to the bottom of the boat.

It seemed but a moment till the boat struck and they were struggling in the waves. But a strip of headland now cut off the worst fury of the storm. The water was calmer; and as the man was a powerful swimmer, they, after a fierce battle with the waves, reached the shore and fell, dumbly, in each other's arms, upon the beach, exhausted.

Suddenly, as they lay there, above the noise of the wind, the waves and the crushing to pieces of their boat upon the rocks, another sound was borne to their ears—a long, moaning wail that was like a chant of the dead, so weird and terrible was it.

They staggered to their feet. Coming down to them from a little row of cabins above were a dozen human creatures, the very sight of whom filled them with terror. Some were without eyes; others without hands or arms; others were crawling without feet. And as they approached they wailed over and over the one word that their poor Chinese tongues had been taught to utter: "Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!"

Both the man and woman understood; but the man only spoke. "Great God! It is D'Arcy Island!" he said in his throat. "The island of lepers!"

The woman did not speak; but she leaned heavily upon him. The waves pounded behind them, and the firs on the hill above them bowed, moaning, before the storm—some never to rise again. And still, above everything, arose that awful wail: "Unclean! Unclean!"

The man looked down upon her. Already she seemed far, far from him. She had lost everything for him—but he was thinking, even now, of what he had lost for her. They were stranded upon an island whereon there was no human being save the lepers placed there by the British Government—an island at which steamers never landed, and from which escape was impossible, unless they signalled—and those two dared not signal—for lepers there are only silence and opium—and death.

His voice shook when he spoke again:

"What accursed luck steered us here!" he cried bitterly.

Then the woman spoke, lifting herself from him and standing alone.

"It was not luck at all," she said steadily, "it was God."

Then suddenly she cast all her trembling, beautiful length downward and lay prone, with her face sunken to the wet sand. And lying so, she clasped her hands hard, hard behind her neck, and cried out in a voice that lifted each word, clear and distinct, above the storm—so deep, so terrible was it with all passion, all submission, all despair—the most sublime prayer ever uttered by a woman: "Oh, Thou God—Who hast guided us two to the one spot on earth where we belong! I see! I understand. Oh, Thou awful God—Thou just God!"

The lepers, crawling back to their hovels, left those two alone; but their weird wail still sank through the falling darkness—"Unclean! Unclean!"

ELLA HIGGINSON.



BY GEORGE MANVILLE FENN.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## UNDER THE BLACK WING.

"WANTS another pick-me-up," said the cabman to himself as he received his orders to drive to Wimpole Street. "Bliged to go to the doctor, after all. Lor', what a blessing it is not to be born a swell! Ain't got nothing to do; money comes in without having to be out all weathers, fare or no fare, and then not having enough to pay the guv'nor and the yard. Consekens is they sets to work on their B's and S's all times o' the day to kill time as they calls it; and the end on it is, time's too much for 'em and they gets killed instead. Ah, seems precious hard lines to be a poor man sometimes, but it's a blessin' arter all, leastwise it would be if the guv'nor'd give me a better horse. Gann with yer! Never see a lady on a bike afore?"

This to his horse, as one of the two-wheeled vehicles was steered rapidly by.

"All right, old man, I forgives," continued the cabman, with a broad grin; "what are we a-comin' to next! Why, if I'd seen her first it would ha' made me shy, let alone a horse. It would ha' made my missus blush."

Braetoun's throbbing veins increased in their smarting as the cab was driven across the Park, and by the time he reached Wimpole Street the thirst for money to free himself from his difficulties had given place to an intense desire for retaliation upon someone.

"Curse him! he shall pay for it in more ways than one," he muttered, as he got out stiffly. "Wait."

"All right, sir," said the man, and then to himself, "look as if you'll want a hambylance. My word, he do sin bad!"

The door was answered this time by Rancer, who had just returned, and he drew back to admit the familiar friend and patient.

"Where's your master?" said Braetoun sharply.

"Library, sir."

"I'll go in."

Rancer did not hesitate, but opened the outer baize door, looking upon Braetoun as one whom his master would see at any time, saw him turn the handle of the inner door quickly, and enter, and then closed after him the thick baize door which deadened all sound.

Consequently he did not hear Braetoun's cry of surprise and rage, nor, as the inner door closed and that at the top of the stairs, as he went down to the pantry, the sounds which followed.

Startled, but hardly surprised after the first moment—for the sequence of events seemed natural that Braetoun should follow his wife upon her flight to him—Murray recovered himself after being violently thrown back by the sudden assault, and after a brief struggle, dashed his infuriated assailant staggering away.

Brief enough encounter, but the moments were sufficient to enable a feeling of determination to flood Murray's brain

—to die sooner than give up the woman he worshipped to him who would part them; while, frantic with jealous rage, the desire to kill was growing in Braetoun's heart.

Both stood panting with exertion, and for a moment Murray turned to where Olive lay motionless upon the couch.

Braetoun saw the wildly passionate look in the other's eyes, and a low, angry utterance that was hardly human escaped his lips. Maddened by pain and rage, he made as if to spring at Murray again, and nerved by the sight of Olive, and fully aware of his superior power, the latter stood firmly on his defence, meaning to close with him or disable him with a blow—anything to gain time enough to get the insensible woman away. He knew that they would not be interrupted. Shut in by the walls of that substantially built old place, no sound would reach the servants, and even if a cry were heard there would be no interference, for more than once he had met a surgeon there in consultation over a painful case, and stood by while some slight operation was performed. The room was secure from intrusion when visitors were there; and, feeling this, Murray's brain was active as to what he had better do. For all compunction was for the time gone. Olive had taken refuge with him, and, no matter what was at stake, in his then state of nervous exaltation he was prepared to go to any extreme.

The next instant he was awake to the fact that his adversary was as ready, and that it was a case of life or death.

For there was a sharp click, click, and Braetoun raised the pistol he had snatched from his breast, and took careful aim at his adversary across the table.

Murray did not hesitate; he dashed round the end to strike the pistol up, when there was a flash; he felt as if he had received a tremendous blow on the left arm which spun him round, and half stunned, he heard the sharp clicking sound again. Then, recovering himself, he once more dashed at Braetoun.

Again there was the flash, and the blow, as the smart crack of the pistol rang out—a keener and more cutting blow, which sent him staggering back, to sink upon his knees by the fireplace, conscious of a deathly sickening sensation, and inconspicuously enough noting the smoke and the foul odour of discharged gunpowder.

Then, as he knelt there, confused and for the moment helpless; he saw through the noisome vapour Braetoun turn his back, and the pistol again cocked, before he raised his arm once more, and took aim at the figure on the sofa.

A spasm ran through Murray, and he tried to rise, but could not, but only gaze wildly for what seemed to be a long period before there was a dull rap.

The pistol had missed fire.

An oath rang upon his ears now, followed by the click of the pistol as it was cocked, and the chambers revolved.

Once more Braetoun took aim at the insensible figure, but with a cry of despair Murray was upon him, armed now, for in the brief instant he had snatched the poker from the fender; and as Braetoun drew trigger, Murray used all his remaining force in the delivery of a blow from which Braetoun dropped as suddenly as if he had received his own bullet in the brain.

Sick at heart, and half fainting, Murray reeled to the couch on the other side of the table, after flinging the poker aside, striking feebly here and there to sweep away the smoke, which, assisted by his natural giddiness, interposed between him and Lady Braetoun.

He did not see that the last bullet her husband had fired had passed into the wall several feet above her head, but dropped upon his knees mentally, as well as bodily, stunned and helpless, filled as his brain was by the one supreme horror that Braetoun in his jealousy had slain the woman he loved.

For some moments he remained motionless, his hands to his throbbing temples, gazing at her in mute despair, while in the utter silence which now reigned, the thin blue smoke wreathed softly above their heads, rising slowly toward the ceiling.

"Dead!" he groaned, at last; "dead! and through me. Olive, Olive, my darling, speak to me—one word!" and in his profound misery he caught her hand in his, and pressed it wildly to his lips.

At the touch, Olive's eyes slowly opened, and she gazed straight before her in utter vacancy, seeing nothing, recalling nothing, till he bent more over her, when as her eyes now met his, they remained for a time fixed, till the reality of where she was and why she had come, came back.

With a look of horror she sprang from the couch and stood gazing at him. Then backed towards the door, as he slowly rose to his feet.

"Roderick—my husband—where is he? What has happened? He came here and I followed him. Why don't you speak?"

As she backed away in her horror and dread of the wild-looking, dishevelled being who came slowly toward her, she kicked against something with her heel, and slight as was the impediment, she nearly fell, while in recovering herself, she saw almost in the same glance the pistol against which her foot had struck, and her husband's prostrate figure, half hidden by the table, and grasped the fact that the room was full of smoke.

With a wild cry she ran to where Braetoun lay, and flung herself upon her knees by his side, trying to raise him, looking wildly in his face, feeling his heart, her hands passing rapidly over his face, and ending by drawing his head upon her lap.

"Dead!—dead!—too late! You have killed him!"

Still half stunned, and with the deathly faintness upon him, Murray stood supporting himself by the other end of the table, swaying to and fro like a drunken man, and watching her with half closed eyes.

"Help! help!" cried Olive at last, but in a low half-stifled voice. "What have you done? My husband—my poor, weak husband; he is dead—he is dead."

She drooped over him now with a piteous wail, kissing his face passionately, and calling him to come back to her by every endearing word she could command, but there was no reply, no movement, and a wave of rage and despair swept over her, as she now raised her head and with eyes flashing with the fierce anger within her breast, she turned upon Murray.

"You have murdered him!" she cried; "my own husband! Wretch! Monster! What have you done?"

Murray uttered a low groan.

"Too late—too late!" she cried. "You have been like a curse to me and mine. Roderick, my husband, I forgive and love you still. Oh, come back to me, come back. Help—a doctor—help! Why do you not come to him? Your cruel work! Do you not see?"

"Olive, for God's sake, hush!" groaned Murray at last, feebly, as he clung to the table to save himself from falling. Then in his mental anguish, as he saw her redouble her caresses, and listened to her words, he gasped faintly: "Have some mercy—have some pity for me. It was in self-defence—yes, in self-defence. What could I do?—he would have killed me."

"Well," she cried, in her mad rage against him; "why should he not?—you, you who would have robbed him—have dealt a cruel blow at the man you called your friend. Roderick! Husband! Oh, my own, my—"

"Are you quite pitiless?" groaned Murray. "Better that he had killed me, or that I had slain myself. I was defending you—it was for your sake."

"My sake!" she cried wildly. "Oh!"

"Yes: I was fighting for you more than for my wretched self. Olive, have pity. After what has passed can you throw me off like this! You cannot turn away now. Am I nothing to you now?"

"To me?" she cried, with a look of horror. "Nothing! I came to save my husband, and I find him dead."

"No, no," he panted feebly, "for God's sake, don't tell me that. It is not true. If I have killed him it was to save your life—the pistol—I thought you were dead."

Olive gazed at him wildly, and his distorted face endorsed her belief that he was mad.

"You came to save him? No!" he cried. "It is a horror, but I tell you it was in self-defence."

He paused to try and gather strength, and there was a low, piteous wail in his tones as he went on:

"Don't—don't turn from me now—at a time like this, when you had fled to me—to your only refuge—to him who has always loved you more than his own life. Don't turn from me now. No one will believe the truth, but there will be time for us to escape."

"Oh!" panted Olive, and she looked wildly at the door for help, but in her terrible dread of the ghastly-looking speaker, she did not dare to call.

"Be calm—try and be calm," he continued. "Give me time to think. The world is nothing to us, and I could not bear to be separated from you now. If I have killed him we should meet no more. Yes, that is it. We must go at once. There will be no shame for you. The sin is mine. No—no sin, no shame, dearest, for you, and I am glad. You are a free woman, now, and you cannot turn from me. I struck him down as he fired at you. Murderer? No, no, you must not call me that!"

He tried to take a step towards her; and she uttered a cry of horror, and in her abject fear she clung to Braetoun's arm.

But she had no further cause for fear. Murray lurched forward, and barely saved himself from falling. He noticed her manner, though, and his tones were full of pleading, as he went on faintly:

"You shrink away. Oh, my love, my love! Can you not see that there was not room in this world for us both? He tried so hard to kill me—to kill us both, but it was not to be—it was fate. Now, quick—listen—while I can speak—before this dreadful cloud closes me in—Olive—you must help me. We must go before it is too late."

"Oh!" she cried wildly. "Can you speak to me like this?"

"Yes," he said, as he pressed his hand to his hot shoulder. "There is no time to lose. Place first; some place of safety."

She turned to him fiercely, and with such a look of horror and disgust that he groaned.

"Oh, my husband, my husband!"

"A woman!" he cried, "a true woman, after all. And yet I loved you, and have proved it even now. Well," he said feebly, once more, "it does not matter. Look there, on the table—the draught I was about to take to end all my misery, when you came and seemed by your presence to snatch me back to life. There is the bell—call for help."

You know what it means. They may not believe, they will not believe, for I shall not speak. I have killed him, and at the worst I can but die. Take him to your heart again; forgive him. I tell you it would bring me back to life."

She had in her dread crept closer to her husband's side, and once more drawn his head upon her lap, as she knelt, too much stunned by her position to act, and feeling in her horror that there was protection for her in the act; and as Murray wildly uttered those last words, Braetoun moaned.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## A WOMAN AT BAY.

MURRAY winced as he heard the cry of hysterical joy which escaped from Olive's lips:

"Roderick!" she cried; "speak to me, oh, speak!"

He slowly unclosed his eyes and stared at her; then round the room, and full consciousness came back as his eyes lighted on Murray. Then with a quick, angry gesture, he thrust himself away from his wife and rose slowly and stiffly to his knees, to glare at both in turn.

So fierce and full of disgust was his look that Olive shrank away, crouching low upon the carpet, and, after trying to speak, covered her face with her hands to try and check the passionate outburst of tears which would have vent.

"Ah! Curse it all!" groaned Braetoun, as he made an effort, rose to his feet, and pressed his hand to the side of his head, took it down and looked at it as if expecting to see blood, but there was none.

Then he turned his eyes upon Murray, who still stood by the table, to which he held fast, and uttered a low savage laugh. Another searching look showed him where the pistol lay upon the carpet.

He crossed to it, tottering a little; and he groaned again and nearly fell as he stooped painfully and picked up the weapon and cocked it, stood looking from one to the other and ended by pointing it at Murray, who drew himself up a little and looked him unflinchingly in the eyes.

Olive uttered a cry, and started to her feet.

"Roderick!" she cried.

"Down, curse you!" he said, turning the pistol muzzle upon her. "The right position for an abandoned woman like you."

"Oh, for pity's sake, don't think that of me, dear, don't think that," she cried, as she threw herself at his feet, and tried to grasp his knees.

"Keep away!" he said savagely, and he struck her with the pistol barrel across one hand.

Murray uttered a groan, but he did not stir.

"Roderick; how could you!" she cried, with a piteous wail. "You don't know—I was frightened—I was afraid of something terrible if you two met, and I came on to try and prevent it."

"Yes, but you managed to get here first," he cried mockingly.

"Oh, Roderick, you don't understand."

He laughed derisively. "I understand enough. Lucky for you, madam, that he struck me as he did, or you'd have had a bullet through your wretched heart."

Perfect confirmation of Murray's words, and Olive's jaw dropped, and she stared wildly at her husband as she realised the danger she had escaped. Then she tried to speak to him from where she knelt, but no words would come; and as he stood there pistol in hand, he seemed to find a fiendish pleasure in threatening her with it, and then changing its direction to Murray.

"I could easily do it," he said; "but he has his dose—a dose for the doctor—and one that he won't forget if he lives; and as for you, it would be a mercy to shoot you, but I'm not going to hang for a harlot."

"Roderick!" she cried, with her hands clasped to him. "You are half mad! You don't know what you say."

"Half mad? Enough to make me quite; but it doesn't matter now. Things have come to the worst, and I hope you'll be happy in your lot."

Again her lips parted to speak, but no words came, and in her despair she turned to Murray, but he made no sign, and Braetoun laughed bitterly.

"Well," he cried, "why don't you make him turn me out of his house? Your house, I suppose, now."

"Roderick!" she cried. "I cannot bear to hear you speak like this. Pray, pray listen to the truth."

"I know it," he cried mockingly; "and I'll have a divorce, and shame you both if it is possible. That is what you would like, but there shall be damages tacked on to it heavy enough to ruin him. You'll get the old man to pay them for him, though you could not get him to help me; but it does not matter. I'm reckless now."

Olive had risen, to stand silent and too indignant to attempt any defence. With her brow knit and eyes half closed, she waited until her husband had ceased speaking and replaced the pistol in his breast.

"There," he said, with a savage look at the half fainting man, holding on still by the table; "the old fashion has gone out, and they say that you can't have satisfaction in a case like this; but I've had mine. Do you hear, Murray? I've had one, and I've a greater one to come yet—a better revenge yet, as you'll see."

He limped across the carpet, wincing the while with pain, and involuntarily raising his hand to his injured head. But before he could reach the door Olive was by his side, and had caught his arm.

"Roderick!" she cried passionately. "You cannot go and leave me."

"Why not? What are you to me? You are no longer wife of mine. Let go! Do you hear me? Let go!"

He wrenched himself free, and sent her staggering back, to save herself from falling by catching at a chair.

But she recovered herself and ran to him again.

"You cannot mean to do me this horrible wrong," she cried piteously. "I forgive you all you have said, but take me away."

"Take you away!" he roared. "No; go to your par amour."

"Oh!" she cried; and she pressed her hands to her ears.

"Go to the cowardly hound who has not spirit enough to defend you."

"Don't, don't, pray don't talk to me like this. It is too horrible. Take me with you—take me home."

"Home!" he cried. "You have no home, unless it is here. Take you with me? Never; and besides, I am going there!"

"Oh!" she cried with a shiver of misery, "you don't know what you are saying and doing. Roderick, dear, listen to me. I am your own true wife. You must—you shall believe me. Listen before it is too late."

She was clinging to his arm, and looked in his eyes imploringly, but with a savage oath he threw her from him again.

"It is too late," he cried. "I tell you that you are no wife of mine. Go to that cowardly hound, as you have chosen him. Take you with me!"

"Yes, yes; you cannot leave me like this."

"Can't?" he cried bitterly. "I'm going straight away to the only woman who ever loved me, so as to be at peace."

"No, no," she cried frantically; and once more she clung to him; "you cannot mean it. I forgive you everything, only take me, take me to your heart again, and believe me true."

"I believe you to be as vile and bad as woman can be," he cried. "Loose my arm, curse you! Let go, before I do you a mischief. You escaped it once; am I to try again?"

"Yes, anything. Kill me," she cried, wild with horror now, "anything—only believe me, and take me away from here."

She uttered a wild shriek, and staggered back, sobbing hysterically, for he had struck her savagely with the back

of his open hand across the face; and with her arms thrown up as if to hide the blow, she fell backward, without an effort to save herself, heavily on the floor.

He turned as he flung open the door, to dart a savage look of hatred at Murray, and then stood in the open doorway to gaze when Olive had risen to her knees, and in spite of all, even the blow, strove to reach him again; but before she could reach the door he had dragged it to, and directly after there was the dull thud of the outer one of baize, followed by the sharp sound of a key being turned.

The noise of something behind her made her turn sharply and stand with her back to the door, about whose panels she hurriedly passed her hands, feeling blindly for the handle. and in her dread pressing it to, instead of drawing it open.

For at last Murray had left the spot where he had stood so long clinging to the edge of the table; and he was now advancing towards her with extended hands.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### FOR LIFE—OR DEATH.

As Murray advanced slowly towards her with his eyes full of appeal, Olive made one more effort to tear open the door and escape; but in her horror and excitement she turned the handle in the wrong direction, uttered a cry of agony, and dashed across the room to avoid the outstretched, trembling hands; but before she reached the window with an insane idea upon her that she must fling it open and spring out, a low agonising cry thrilled her to the heart, and she turned at bay, trembling, and unable now to stir, though feeling that she had nothing more to bear.

For she grasped the fact that Murray was reeling, his eyes were fixed and vacant, and his hands were striving feebly to catch at help.

Then he uttered a low piteous cry, his glazing eyes staring and his yords rang in her ears;

"Olive, where are you? In pity help me—I love you—don't let me die."

As the last words were uttered, Murray's hands dropped to his sides, and he fell forward upon his face, while for the first time Olive fully grasped the fact that he had been indeed fighting in her defence, for the carpet where he had stood, clinging to the table, was deeply stained with blood, and he was now apparently dying at her feet.

Stunned by the horror of her position—forsaken by her husband, thrown, as it were, entirely upon Murray's mercy, and with him wounded perhaps to the death, Olive stood with eyes starting and hands clasped, looking down at him, for the moment not daring to move.

In a confused, helpless way, she realised that her reputation was at stake; that at all costs she must escape from that house, and go back home or seek her father; but how could she go and leave Murray dying there without first giving the alarm by summoning help?

It was horrible! What would the servants say—what would they think of her! They must have heard the noise, and perhaps were now listening at the door.

"God help me! What shall I do?" she cried; and she ran to the door, trembling so, that she felt that she must faint; but as her hand rested upon it and she was about to rush out and flee as if for her very life, she turned to gaze back at the prostrate figure with a feeling of horror and dislike rising above every other thought. But at the sight of the blood staining his shoulder, a shudder ran through her, the natural compassionate woman asserted itself, and with a piteous cry she sank down upon her knees to search for the wound and tear out first her handkerchief and then his, to try and stop the bleeding.

Before a minute had passed she awoke to the fact that her efforts were perfectly useless, for the bandages she applied were soaked directly; and, forgetful now of everything but the peril in which Murray seemed to be, she rose from her knees and rang violently at the bell, to stand shuddering as she gazed down at her hands.

There was a sharp knocking at the baize door almost

directly after, then the clicking of the lock, and Rancer entered looking rather wild, and as soon as he saw his master extended on the carpet, he cried excitedly:

"Then they were shots! Oh, my lady, what does it all mean?"

"Don't, don't talk! Help!" she cried.

The words were hardly needed.

Rancer had had his experiences, and he was already throwing off his coat and turning up his sleeves.

"No, no, a doctor—a surgeon," panted Olive.

"Directly, my lady. Must do something first. Here, you ring again—twice," he cried, with the authority of one who knew what he was about. "Don't let any come in, but send the maid to fetch Mr. Gainsford. He'll know where."

"Yes—yes—Gainsford," she said excitedly; and she obeyed, and waited trembling in the hall till the woman servant came up from below, heard her half incoherent orders, and as if she too were accustomed to emergencies, went to the front door at once and hurried out.

Olive passed back into the library, to find Rancer busy on his knees with Murray's coat ripped off with a knife, and the shirt sleeves cut away from the left arm.

"Open that wash-stand, my lady. Basin, sponge, and water, please—quick!"

"Yes, yes," panted Olive; and she obeyed eagerly, bringing the objects asked for, to set them on the floor.

"Towels out of the stand drawer, my lady."

These were hurriedly fetched, and Olive looked on with lips quivering and hands tremblingly eager to help.

"How was it, my lady?" said the man sternly, as he busily prepared to bandage the wounds, which were bleeding freely. "But there, I know. His lordship had one of his attacks on, I suppose. Not fit to be trusted at such a time. I've seen how bad he's been getting. Regularly mad, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, half mad," cried Olive, snatching at the explanation.

"Quite, to do this. Now, my lady, hold his arm, please."

Olive shuddered, but knelt down at once, and took the white, firm arm between her hands, seeing that the bullet had ripped a gash deep into the biceps on the inner side, almost as cleanly as if it had been done with a knife.

"This isn't bad, my lady," said the man, as he bandaged away; "only bleeds freely. It's that shot right through the shoulder that I plugged. I'm afraid of the bone. Try and bear up, my lady. You're helping me almost like a trained nurse."

"Don't speak to me, please. Go on."

"Oh, yes, my lady; I'll go on, but you'd better keep on talking to me. You mustn't faint, please, now. I shall want you to get a bottle and glass from the cabinet directly. You'll see one with L-i-q-u-i-d—A-m-m-o-n-i-a on it. Not yet. Hold the bandage tightly. That's the way. Blood comes through, but we're checking the bleeding, and Mr. Gainsford won't be long if he's at home. Very horrible for you, my lady. Where's the pistol?"

"I—I—don't know—I think Lord Braetoun took it away with him."

"Tut—tut—tut!" muttered Rancer, "and in such a state as he was. Thank you, my lady. There, that's a hospital knot. I used to be in the Middlesex, close by here."

He looked up with a quiet confident smile in the ghastly face gazing wildly into his.

"Will he die?" said Olive, in a strange whisper.

(To be continued.)

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